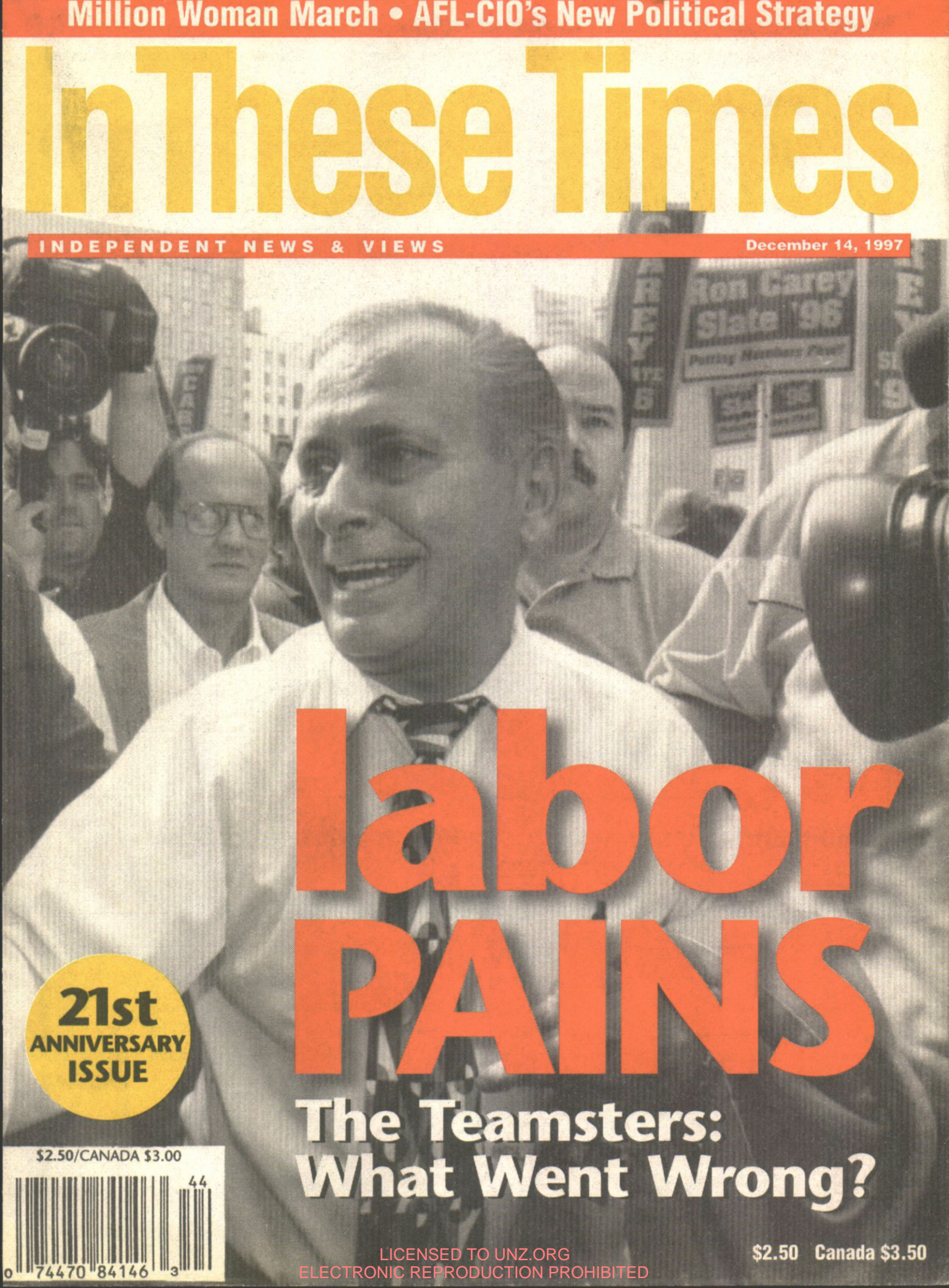


Million Woman March • AFL-CIO's New Political Strategy

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 14, 1997



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**21st
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Editorial

Saddam's Dangerous Game

Is Saddam Hussein a madman bent on world domination? Does he pose a real military threat in the Middle East, as nearly everyone in the U.S. media intones in a steady drumbeat of heated rhetoric? Or could it be that something else is going on?

To hear Clinton tell it, the latest crisis over Iraq is a simple matter. Saddam is refusing to allow Americans to participate on the U.N. weapons-inspection team responsible for overseeing elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction so that he can secretly make missiles and biological warfare agents.

But against whom is Saddam supposed to use these theoretical weapons, and to what end?

Some observers say that he would use them against Israel, but Israel is immensely more powerful than Iraq. Saddam's military machine was decimated during the Gulf War, and it has been further dismantled under U.N. supervision. Israel, by contrast, has atomic bombs and the largest arsenal of advanced weaponry in the Middle East. To attack Israel would be suicide, and while Saddam is a vicious and corrupt dictator, no serious analyst considers him to be suicidal.

Others suggest that Saddam might use these weapons against Iran. In such a contest, he would be more evenly matched; indeed, the eight-year war between Iraq and Iran ended in a stalemate, even though Iraq enjoyed the support of the Reagan and Bush administrations. The United States, of course, is no longer going to supply arms to Saddam, nor is anyone else for that matter. And even if he could buy arms elsewhere, another war against Iran would have little support at home and would further isolate Saddam from his fellow Arabs.

So what's all the fuss about?

For the Clinton administration—surprise,

surprise—it's about oil, and for Iraq, it's about ending the U.N. sanctions, particularly the embargo on trade.

American oil companies, and therefore the president, have a vested stake in maintaining U.N. sanctions against Iraq. If the U.N. allowed Iraq—normally one of the world's major oil producers—to resume full production and sales, it would create a global oil glut that would drive down prices and profits.

Saddam wants the American members of the U.N. team out because he needs a team in place that will agree to a timetable for lifting the sanctions. He has long demanded that the Security Council set a firm date for the sanctions to end. And he believes that a more "balanced" weapons-inspection team—whose composition reflected the permanent members on the Security Council—would lift the sanctions sooner.

Indeed, as the *New York Times* commented recently, France and Russia "may simply be tired of being led around by the nose in the Persian Gulf by the world's only superpower." Both countries want more trade with Iraq. They would like to establish a commercial relationship with Iraq similar to that which the Clinton administration has with China. As French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine recently observed, "No country has a foreign policy based solely on human rights."

So Saddam is playing a game. It is a dangerous one, but he is desperate and has nothing to lose. If his gambit doesn't work, he can always back down. In any event, he will have sharpened the differences between Clinton and his European allies.

Regardless of how this diplomatic crisis is resolved, we think it's time to start thinking of the needs of the Iraqi people and to stop the threats of more bombing and greater sanctions. ■

**Behind Saddam
Hussein's ban on
U.S. arms inspectors
lies a stark reality:
He desperately
needs the U.N.
sanctions to be
lifted. Clinton alone
stands in his way.**

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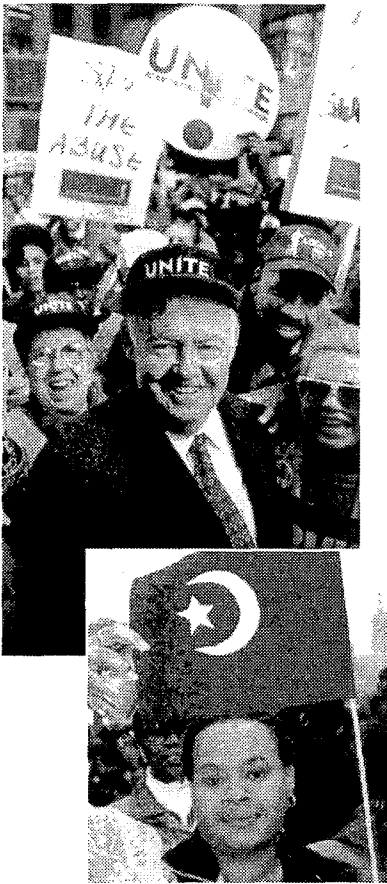
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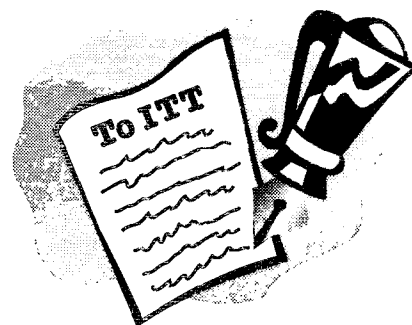
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Cover design by Estelle Carol
Photograph by Jim West

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Letters



the Programmers

I read Ellen Ullman's piece ("It's the Modems," October 19) about how the computer networks she engineers are destroying the small businesses that gave the old downtowns such character, and maybe the downtowns themselves. I believe I know what the problem is:

Ellen, you've been under a lot of stress lately, what with settling your father's estate and the building and all, and this has led to a mild depression that you have mistaken for the pangs of conscience. Well, that's silly, isn't it? I mean, if you were responsible, you'd stop doing what you're doing, right?

I'm sure you're feeling better by now, but if the depression recurs, take a break. Go have a latté or something. And please, Ellen, no more whining, okay?

Louis Desprez
St. Paul, Minn.

"It suddenly dawned on me that the computer systems I built were related to a downtown now all emptied of people," says Ellen Ullman. Wake up, Ellen! Why should that surprise you? Since the inception of automation, it has been obvious that the computer industry's prosperity would replace people in the work force. Just about every industry is feeling the impact. Anyone attempting to place a telephone call to a company knows the circu-

lar web of button-pressing and automated messages. With faxes, fax modems, e-mail and the Internet, why should an employer retain full-time staff and absorb the cost of benefits? At the same time, technology only entices people to remain isolated from others.

Elaine Kabat
Harrison, N.J.

New Ideas

Lorna Salzman ("Letters," October 19) is mistaken about the New Party of Long Island. Our electoral strategy has been flexible. We use every method available, including running candidates on the New Party ballot line (Fred Brewington), running a progressive major party candidate on the New Party line (Tom DiNapoli), entering our candidate in the Democratic Party primary (Brewington, Diana Coleman) or simply endorsing and working for more desirable major party candidates (recently James Krivo, Roger Corbin and Patrick Williams for county legislature). As we grow in membership and organizational strength, our New Party ballot line will increase despite the legal obstacles.

We plan to continue this basic approach of working both independently as well as in coalition with progressive forces wher-

ever they may be—Democrats, Labor, Greens, etc. We look forward to joint activity with the Green Party and all other progressive forces on Long Island.

Diana Coleman
Don Shaffer
Co-chairs, New Party of Long Island
Long Island, N.Y.

Girls Town

I disagree with the claim that the Young Women's Leadership School in New York City discriminates against boys by admitting only girls ("We Don't Need No Coeducation," November 2). The issue of educational discrimination against girls at the junior high level cannot be addressed by "retooling" teachers to call on girls more often.

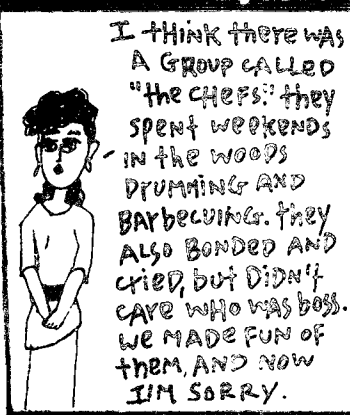
The most fundamental gender-based characteristic of our society is the educational-and-career preference given to males. Does anyone need reminding that boys are oriented toward careers, while girls are oriented to motherhood, preferably married motherhood?

Progressive forces should be supporting talented young women instead of whining

Nicole Hollander



Sylvia



Letters

about "babies having babies" and complaining about the moronic role models offered to youngsters on television and at the movies.

The New York Board of Education is doing something right. Other cities, take note!

Rhoda Hoffman
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Hold On to the Dream

I was glad to see Salim Muwakkil mention the book *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* by Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton in his article on the anniversary of the desegregation of Little Rock High School ("Letting Go of the Dream," November 2). This book shows that, along with inferior housing quality, segregation also allocates less desirable schooling, jobs, insurance costs, public services and, ultimately, wealth.

But Massey and Denton spell out what can be done to make white people see that they have, along with African-Americans, much to gain in an integrated society. Residential segregation has become the forgotten factor in race relations. The book shows that the situation has a remedy, that there can be residential integration that no one need fear.

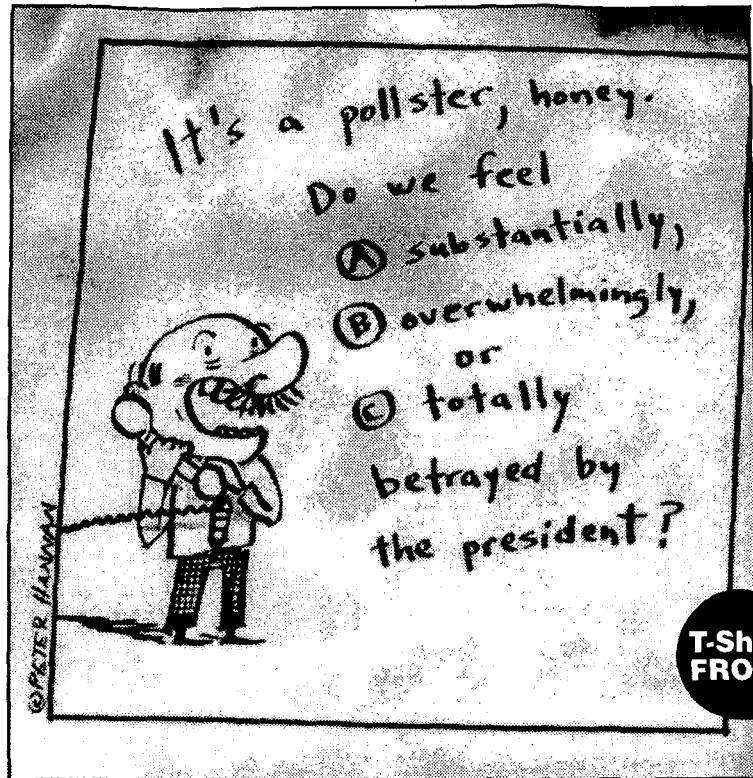
Bette Hurst
Damascus, Md.

On Track

Some years ago, I wrote to you complaining about the lack of diversity in your writing staff. Today, I want to commend you for two great writers in Annette Fuentes and Juan Gonzalez. I am particularly impressed because their writing is not exclusively on the "people-of-color beat." Between Fuentes, Gonzalez and the writing of Salim Muwakkil, *In These Times* is beginning to provide a broad, quality perspective that reflects what the United States really is. No other progressive journal does that right now.

Victor Rodriguez
Irvine, Calif.

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Drug War on Guerrillas

BY COLETTA YOUNGERS

For three days in mid-October, paramilitary gunmen took over Miraflores, a town in the heart of the Guaviare coca-growing region of Colombia. They executed at least seven local residents whose names appeared on a list of alleged guerrilla supporters, provoking an exodus from the town as people fled in fear. Local residents overheard the killers say, "Who said we couldn't come to this town? From here on, we give the orders here." The gunmen were apparently determined to wrest control of the area and its lucrative drug profits from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Marxist guerrillas who controlled the Guaviare countryside.

The massacre had the support of members of Colombia's armed forces. Military and police units in Miraflores took no action to stop the killings. According to witnesses, army soldiers radioed for a private airplane when the killing stopped and escorted the gunmen to it. The next day, the U.S. drug czar, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, landed at a nearby military base in San José del Guaviare to show his support for Colombia's soldiers and police under fire from "powerful narco-guerrillas."

In a dramatic reversal of policy, McCaffrey announced during his visit that the United States is willing to help Colombia combat not only drug traffickers but the guerrillas as well. Over the past decade, the United States has given Colombia more than half a billion dollars for its antinarcotics efforts. However, after the guerrillas won major victories against the Colombian military, Washington has become increasingly concerned about the insurgent threat.

Even as McCaffrey spoke out repeatedly about the need to stop paramilitary violence and protect human rights, he erased the already blurry line between

counternarcotics and counterinsurgency activity.

The U.S. government appears to be plunging into the region's most brutal civil conflict, where local security forces have regularly allied themselves with right-wing paramilitary groups to combat not only guerrillas, but anyone engaged in political or social activism.



Gen. Barry McCaffrey

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The net result is an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 political killings a year.

The Clinton administration has failed to heed the warnings in its own reports on Colombia's human rights crisis. In 1996 and 1997, Congress "decertified" Colombia for its failure to comply with U.S. narcotics objectives, following well-founded accusations that President Ernesto Samper had received more than \$6 million in campaign contributions from the Cali drug cartel. Decertification suspends U.S. aid—except humanitarian and antinarcotics support—and invokes a range of economic sanctions.

But Colombia, the only U.S. ally ever to be decertified, lost very little because most of its aid is directed toward the war on drugs.

Since the scandal, the U.S. government has sought closer relations with the Colombian armed forces and police, while distancing itself from the civilian-elected government of Samper. The armed forces are reaping the benefits of Washington's two-track approach. U.S. military assistance has quadrupled this year, rising to around \$100 million.

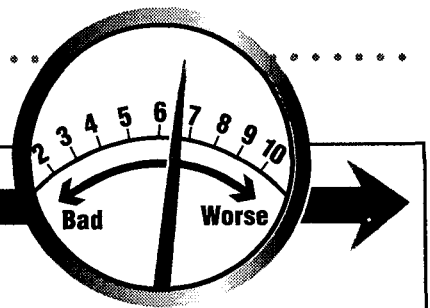
The antinarcotics police will receive the bulk of the aid. But for the first time in several years, the United States also will support the Colombian army directly, providing it with boats and aircraft, spare parts for helicopters, weapons and training. Oriented toward military action rather than law enforcement, the aid is equally applicable to counternarcotics and counterinsurgency efforts.

The assistance allotted for the Colombian security forces stands in stark contrast to the \$273 million in development aid that the United States will give to all of Latin America and the Caribbean next year. Reminiscent of the levels of U.S. assistance to Central American militaries during the height of the Cold War, the nature and extent of U.S. security assistance to Colombia raise questions about the Clinton administration's rhetorical commitment to human rights and democracy building. Washington appears to have failed to learn from its past mistakes in Central America and now, in the name of fighting both drugs and communism, is becoming entwined in yet another unwinnable war. ■

Coletta Youngers is a senior associate at the Washington Office on Latin America.

appall-o-meter

BY DAVID FUTRELLE



The In These Times Index of Indecencies



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Checkout Time 7.6

Suicide, it seems, is bad for business. Jack Kevorkian has been involved in perhaps two dozen suicides over the past year, but Michigan prosecutors, believing he is unprosecutable, no longer even bother to press charges. "We're just becoming the capital of assisted suicides," one less-than-cheerful Michigan police chief told The Associated Press. "If you want a suicide, come to Oakland County, Michigan."

Evidently, this new designation is not bringing the tourists in—at least not the *right kind* of tourists. Local hotel and motel owners are not exactly pleased about Kevorkian's habit of leaving bodies behind in their rooms. "It really is time for us to speak up and try to bring him to the point where he will move his activity into

another environment," Michael O'Callaghan, president of the Hotel Association of Greater Detroit, told the press. "If he wants to do that at his house, it's a more appropriate place than in someone's hotel."

Read All About It 6.1

What do you do with a word-processing program so bloated with useless features that you can barely get it to work? Don't go back to your old, functional software. For just \$21.95, you can buy a book to make the best of a bad situation. Just out from Ingram Book Company: *Word 97 Annoyances* by Woody Leonhard, Lee Hudspeth and T.J. Lee. "Word 97 contains hundreds of annoying idiosyncrasies that can be either eliminated or worked around," an ad for the book explains. "In an informative yet humorous way, *Word 97 Annoyances* shows how to solve these problems, offers tips and customizations, and takes an in-depth look at what makes Word tick."

Also featured in Ingram's list of Christmas "Gift Giving Ideas": *How to Beat the Sharks When the Water's Polluted* by Mike Sevenau. "Anybody can sell a product that's wonderful and works," the catalog explains, "but what happens when the product is marginal

at best? In this innovative book, Mike Sevenau tells how to successfully sell a product with holes in it."

Sounds like the perfect present for an Ingram salesperson.

What Rhymes with "Neo-Nazi?" 8.3

Russia—land of Pushkin, Pasternak and ... Nadezhda Strelnikova. According to the Itar-Tass news agency, this budding poetess of Western Russia recently won herself \$10 and a copy of the collected works of ultra-nationalist kook Vladimir Zhirinovsky for composing what was judged to be the "best ditty" in honor of her political idol and his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). The poem reads:

Zhirinovsky, him I know
I'll sign up with the LDPR
He has promised us to show
How to rebuild the USSR.

Something must have been lost in translation.

Stunned by a stupid statement?

Write to: Appall-O-Meter
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china

Most Favored Multinationals

BY JEFFERSON DECKER

During the late October summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, President Clinton gave his counterpart an earful about the virtues of permitting dissent, accusing Jiang of being "on the wrong side of history."

But Clinton's real interests—in trade, not human rights—were revealed in the guest list for the state dinner held in Jiang's honor. *George* photographers no doubt noticed movie star Patrick Stewart (a.k.a. Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the starship *U.S.S. Enterprise*), who attended with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. More importantly, *In These*

Times counted 30 CEOs of major corporations on the 111-person guest list. How many labor leaders, environmentalists or prominent human rights advocates got a seat at the table? Zero.

Granted, inviting China critics to a friendly dinner of pepper-crusted beef and chilled lobster might not have been diplomatic. But that didn't keep Clinton from inviting Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), a leading right-wing critic of the Jiang regime.

The 30 corporations gave an average of nearly \$300,000 a piece to Democratic campaigns in the 1995-96 election

cycle. Several CEOs walked away from the state dinner with more than a full stomach. Westinghouse gave a mere \$115,600, but Clinton arranged at the summit to open up China's \$70 billion nuclear reactor market to the energy giant. Meanwhile the leading proponent of China's Most Favored Nation trading status, Boeing, shelled out \$259,240 to the Dems. Boeing inked a \$3 billion deal to build commercial aircraft for China at the summit. Neither company is even a loyal Clintonite: Both corporations gave twice as much to Republicans last year. ■

Here Comes Hightower

Jim Hightower, the former Texas agriculture commissioner turned full-time pundit and nationally syndicated radio talk show host, is currently touring the country to promote his latest book, *There's Nothing in the Middle of the Road but Yellow Stripes and Dead Armadillos*, and to fire up the masses with his own blend of populist barnstorming and down-home wisdom. During a stop in Chicago, he spoke with the editors of *In These Times*.

IT: In *These Times*: Do you find the left too moralistic or too elitist?

JH: Too elitist. I think morality is the strength of liberals and progressives. There's a value system that is ingrained in the ordinary person in our country on things like economic fairness, social justice, equal opportunity. So arguments for the kinds of progressive policies that we care about should not be cast in academic and policy-wonkish kinds of language, but in the language of those values. We should not say "redistribution of wealth" because immediately that's a wonkish thing. Rather, we should say we're talking about economic fairness, and then say that the economic gains being generated by the many are being hauled to the top by the few. And you can say, sure Wall Street's whizzing; it's whizzing on you and me. Then you've got people's attention, and you can begin to talk about solutions.

IT: You talk a lot about class war. But why is it that when Pat Buchanan uses the language of class war, it has such resonance, and yet all the progressive third-party efforts seem to be very marginal in terms of American politics?

JH: But they're growing. What they say does resonate with people. But those parties don't get much in the way of exposure. What we don't have is any national politics that addresses the same issues, and the problem is really not Newt Gingrich and the Republicans—the problem is the Democrats. Some

people say we need a third party. I say we need a second one. We need a party that is unabashedly going to go at corporate power. And as Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot have shown, there's a huge constituency waiting out there to respond to that. I mean, Pat Buchanan got that response in the Republican primary, surely the least fertile ground for a populist campaign.

IT: So, the left should be attracting Buchanan voters?

JH: Those folks disagree with us on abortion and on prayer in the schools,



but they strongly agree with us on these other issues. Rather than going at them and saying, "you're wrong on abortion," we ought to go to them and say: "My God, you're right on minimum wage and you're right on the need for strong unions in this country and, by the way, we'll have a discussion later on about this abortion thing. We can agree to disagree on that." You don't build a political movement by finding the strongest point of disagreement that you have with folks and assailing them on it. You establish some credibility on the economic issues and then you appeal to what is fundamentally a sense of tolerance, a live-and-let-live ethic that is very strong, certainly in Texas and the South.

IT: What can the rest of the country

learn from Texas?

JH: Humor. It wouldn't hurt. And history too. Because the perception of Texas is the *Dallas* TV show or Phil Gramm or an oil state. But Texas history, like national history, is actually a history of working stiffs and mavericks and mutts. Texas was not settled by the oil industry. It was not settled by the power establishment. There used to be a phrase called GTT that people in Mississippi and Alabama and Tennessee slapped on their doors. They were tenant farmers fleeing debt. And they'd put GTT on the door. It meant "Gone To Texas," and good luck finding me. Texas was settled by debtors and mavericks and more than a few psychopaths as well.

IT: George Bush just inaugurated a new library.

JH: Yes. I love the way they say it's "his" library when it's \$83 million of our money. It's got 40 million pieces of paper, 2 million photographs, and I forget how many hours of videotape—yes, he taped himself too. The students of Texas A&M, where this library is, will tell you that the undergraduate library is in shambles. Yet here we've got this little pyramid built to George Bush. George Bush was a less than mediocre president. Bill Clinton is, too. Ronald Reagan was. Jimmy Carter was. Gerald Ford, for God's sake. They've all got libraries.

IT: Who was more than mediocre?

JH: Well, you've got to go back awhile. I never thought when I was fighting in the '60s to get Lyndon Johnson out of power that he was going to be the most progressive president of my lifetime.

IT: That's an irony.

JH: Yeah. Listen to those Johnson tapes that are now coming out. Bill Clinton has said, "My legacy is going to be racial tolerance and race relations, and to get there I'm going to appoint a commission and we're going to do a study." And then listen to Lyndon Johnson saying, "I will lose the presidency and it will cost the Democratic Party the South and may destroy the Democratic Party to do these civil rights laws—but I'm going to do them." That's a whole different thing. Clinton should listen to those tapes. ■

nuclear waste

Gambling on "Mobile Chernobyl"

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Nevada is one of the few states that never built a nuclear power reactor. But if lawmakers have their way, it will become the nation's nuclear waste graveyard.

A bill now winding its way through Congress mandates that land at the Nevada Test Site, which is located 150 miles from Las Vegas, will become the temporary parking lot for 95 percent of the radioactive waste generated by the nation's 110 commercial nuclear reactors. The waste will accumulate for at least 20 years at the temporary storage site until it is entombed in vaults deep inside nearby Yucca Mountain, a site that the nuclear industry is eyeing as the final resting place for the nation's nuclear waste.

At least that's the plan. Yucca Mountain is far from a sure or safe bet. For one thing, geologists say the site leaks, posing the real threat of nuclear waste hemorrhaging into groundwater. For another, it's on unstable terrain. This area of Nevada has been rocked by more than 650 earthquakes in the past 20 years. Even so, if nuclear industry lobbyists are able to convince Congress to open a temporary storage site, which is prohibited under current law, the fate of Yucca Mountain will probably be sealed regardless of the economic or environmental costs.

The entire scheme has been nicknamed the "Mobile Chernobyl" plan by its opponents. The plan calls for more than 30 years of continuous shipping by train and truck of 60,000 casks filled with irradiated reactor fuel. A single rail cask harbors nearly 200 times as much of the radioactive isotope cesium-137 as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. One study by the General Accounting Office says that more than 300 "accidents" can be expected involving the shipment of this high-level nuclear waste.

The \$4 billion plan's most influential

proponent is the nuclear industry's chief lobbyist, James Curtiss. Curtiss, a partner in the high-powered D.C. lobby shop of Winston & Strawn, learned the trade as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission during the Bush era and has built a powerful bipartisan coalition in Congress under the slogan that "one site is better than 100."

This argument is dismissed as a red herring by environmentalists. "The technology needed to store the waste is the same at an interim site as dry casks at a reactor site," says Michael Mariotte of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. "The only difference is the additional risk caused by radioactive waste transportation."

Despite declarations about the impeccable safety of nuclear power, the industry is getting nervous. For decades, radioactive waste has been piling up on their property along with billions of dollars in potential liability for leaks, accidents and radiation-induced cancers that the companies' own scien-

tists and accountants tell them are inevitable. (A 1996 industry study claims that the nuclear industry may be facing as much as \$56 billion in potential liabilities unless it can unload the waste on the federal government.) There are now more than 35 thousand metric tons of radioactive waste from nuclear reactors, a toxic stockpile that is increasing by 5 tons a day. Scientists estimate that this glowing mountain of waste will take about 4 billion years to decay to a "harmless" condition.

Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) says the bill, which President Clinton has threatened to veto, has been on the nuclear industry's agenda for decades. "They want to transfer their risks, their responsibilities and their business expenses to the American taxpayer," Reid says. "They want to move their radioactive waste out of their backyard and onto the public's property. They think now is the time to close the deal. They do not care about the risks. It's not just a bad bill, it is dangerous legislation." ■

labor

Struck Out

BY ULYSSES SMITH

The largest teachers strike in North American history ended November 10 when 126,000 Ontario teachers returned to work after two weeks off the job. Union leaders were left scrambling to come up with a new strategy after their walkout failed to derail major budget-cutting legislation.

The teachers walked out on October 27 to protest Bill 160, the Progressive Conservative government's sweeping reform legislation that would transfer educational decision-making from local school boards to the provincial government, giving it power over such matters as class size and the amount of time spent by teachers in the classroom.

Premier Mike Harris plans to cut \$700 million from the province's \$14 billion education budget. He puts a positive spin on the cuts, saying fiscal discipline will enhance accountability and improve student achievement. Union officials estimate that the bill would eliminate as many as 10,000 teaching jobs.

The strike kept more than two million children out of school, but the government refused to budge. Fearing an erosion of public support, union leaders sent teachers back to work, opting to regroup rather than prolong the strike. Union officials declined to comment on their new strategy. ■

Media Critic

Knight-Ridder's Rampage

BY THOMAS GOETZ

No matter how cut-throat capitalism gets, most companies try to avoid getting a reputation for unfair labor practices, union busting and all-around cailousness. Bad press isn't good business—especially if you're a media company. The exception, it seems, is Knight-Ridder: The \$2.5 billion, 36-newspaper monolith seems to love giving the competition something to write about.

Just weeks after being found guilty in June by a Washington, D.C., administrative law judge of unfair labor practices at the *Detroit Free Press*, Knight-Ridder took its shoddy management practices to Monterey, Calif., where it acquired the 35,000-circulation *Monterey Herald* in a swap with Scripps Howard.

Before the ink dried on the deal, Knight-Ridder announced that it would not recognize the paper's contract with employee unions. Without further ado, the company unilaterally fired the *Herald's* 231-member staff and forced them to reapply for their positions. Before being rehired, each had to submit to IQ, grammar and spelling tests. (Staffers at the non-union *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, which was also acquired by Knight-Ridder in the swap, were not forced to reapply for their jobs.)

Eventually, 180 *Herald* staffers returned, all without job security and some as freelance employees without benefits. "It's Detroit all over again," says the Newspaper Guild's Darren Carroll, who represents the paper's union staff. "Knight-Ridder seems dedicated to breaking this paper and its union."

In September, the Guild filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board accusing Knight-Ridder of unfair labor practices, including refusing to provide information about their hiring plans and coercive questioning of staff members to determine union sympathies. The labor board is reviewing the allegations.

Knight-Ridder denies that it is engaged in union busting. The contracts, the company says, were simply "too restrictive" for a small-circulation paper. Knight-Ridder CEO Tony Ridder downplays any controversy his house-cleaning has stirred up, saying he hasn't detected any unhappy readers in Monterey. "My sense is the community is mostly disinterested," Ridder was quoted in a front-page *Herald* story in August. "The typical reaction I've gotten is 'Thank God.'"

Not that the company didn't expect trouble. After Knight-Ridder took over in August, guards from Vance Security took positions outside *Herald* offices for over a month. Vance was a particularly rich choice: The firm has a long history of guarding such unfavorites as Imelda Marcos and Pat Buchanan. Vance also has a thriving side-business in union busting: It was called in by Caterpillar in its 1992 battle against the United Auto Workers, fought the United Mineworkers of America during its strike against Pittston Coal in the late '80s and, most recently, battled the Guild in Detroit.

Three months into the new regime, negotiations for a new contract are ongoing—though not going well, says Carroll.

So far, Knight-Ridder's demands include making all staff at-will employees (meaning that they can be terminated without cause), and imposing mandatory in-house arbitration for all grievances. "They know these are things we could never agree to," Carroll says. "They so fundamentally undermine employee and union rights that they make agreement next to impossible."

The union, meanwhile, has already passed a strike vote, and has started a monthly newspaper, the *Peninsula Free Press*, dedicated to covering the crisis (available at www.sjguild.org). Staffers have also lined up community support: Thousands of subscribers have signed cancellation pledges, offering to cancel their *Herald* subscriptions if the union deems it necessary.

"What has happened in Monterey is symbolic of the transformation of this company, and the business," says Carroll. "The fact is, putting out good papers is out, and short-term profit-taking is the new norm." ■

Thomas Goetz covers media and business for The Village Voice.

online

- What do Linus Pauling, Par Lagerkvist, Milton Friedman and Marie Curie have in common? They all won the Nobel Prize. Extensive information on the accomplishments of these and every other Nobel laureate can be found at the Nobel Prize Internet Archive (www.nobelprizes.com). It's loaded with trivia and finally puts to rest the steamy scandal over the lack of a prize in mathematics.
- Those looking for less pomp may prefer to visit the Ig Nobel Prize home page (www.eecs.harvard.edu/ig_nobel/), a Harvard spoof of the ceremonies. This year's winners include the author of *The Bible Code* and the inventors of the Tamagotchi.
- Billed as the "Web Site That Tells Where the Dead Politicians are Buried," The Political Graveyard (www.politicos.com/tpg/) tracks every former president, vice president, cabinet member, member of Congress and Supreme Court justice six feet under. It's also a fascinating catalog of family histories and bizarre circumstances. It lists not only the oldest, youngest and Jewish politicians, but also those who were Shriners, donated their bodies to science or died in elevators.

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Workfare Workers Seek Union Rights

BY DEIDRE McFADYEN

In 1967, New York became the first state to grant public sector employees collective-bargaining rights. Today, New York labor activists are once again leading the struggle to expand those rights to workfare workers.

"Workfare workers are working 20 to 30 hours a week and have no protections whatsoever. They are totally at the whim of people in power and exploited mercilessly," says John Kest, organizing director of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), the community group that is leading the drive to organize participants in New York's Work Experience Program (WEP), the nation's oldest and largest workfare program.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and state Republicans refuse to recognize the right of the city's nearly 40,000 workfare participants to unionize, arguing that they are not technically workers. Hoping to sway public opinion against the mayor, ACORN held a nonbinding election in mid-October asking workfare workers if they want union representation. Almost half of the city's workfare participants cast ballots at polling stations set up at dozens of workfare sites, check-cashing storefronts and city welfare offices. Almost 99 percent voted yes.

WEP workers want a formal grievance procedure, which would give them some recourse when supervisors issue inadequate equipment and clothing, restrict their access to bathrooms and drinking water, or sanction them for spurious reasons.

They also want the city to establish a real jobs program. Currently, fewer than 10 percent of WEP workers move on to regular jobs.

District Council 37, the city's largest public sector union, wasn't involved in the planning of the election but sent out a newsletter to WEP workers advising them to vote yes. "There have been long conversations about how we might work

compatibly with ACORN," says Marty Lubin, the union's associate director. The two groups, however, still don't see eye to eye on the issue of who should represent workfare workers if they win recognition as city employees.

Labor activists are convinced that it's only a matter of time before governments are forced to recognize workfare

as a form of work like any other. "These workers are entitled to representation," says Jack Sheinkman, president emeritus of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and co-chair of the committee that oversaw the election. "It would set a landmark and send a message to other cities and states as to what should be done." ■

left politics

Real Reform Efforts

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

In October, Congress bickered over and then killed the half-hearted McCain-Feingold campaign-finance reform bill. During the debate, the Democratic National Committee was busy preparing for a weekend retreat in early November to Amelia Island, Fla., where 50 couples paid \$50,000 each to clink drinks with Bill Clinton, Al Gore and a coterie of cabinet secretaries.

It was left to a few folks not on the guest list from Texas and Massachusetts to work on cleaning up the electoral process.

In Austin, Texas, citizens fed up with the current campaign-finance mess formed "Austinites for a Little Less Corruption." The group put a measure on the city's November 4 ballot that sets \$100 contribution limits in campaigns for municipal office. The proposal passed with 72 percent of the vote. Similar \$100-limit laws have passed in Arkansas, Colorado, Missouri, Montana and Oregon. Judges ruled the Missouri and Oregon laws illegal, while the measures in the other three states are still in court, following legal challenges that spending limits impede free speech.

In Massachusetts, Mass Voters for Clean Elections are collecting signatures to place a public-financing measure on next year's state ballot. On October 25 alone, the group marshaled 1,800 volunteers to help. If passed, the Clean Election Law would implement a system of public financing for all state races. Similar measures were passed by Maine voters in 1996 and by the Vermont legislature in 1997 (see *In These Times*, June 24, 1996 and May 12, 1997). Both reforms will take effect in 2000.

Public Campaign, the Washington-based reform organization, is spearheading a national movement for public financing, helping groups in 28 other states push similar initiatives.

Meanwhile, following widespread Republican victories on election day, the GOP is counting the haul from a November 5 grand old party that raked in an estimated \$6 million. The Democrats, still nearly \$12.5 million in debt from the 1996 election, must scramble to catch up with a Republican Party flush with cash. The GOP plans to solidify its control of Congress in 1998, in preparation for the 2000 political shopping season, when the big ticket item, the White House, goes on the block. ■

NAFTA Sours Mexican Sugar

BY RON BIGLER

As President Clinton was defeated in his struggle to renew fast track authority in Congress, a dispute with Mexico over the terms of the original NAFTA agreement showed that free trade can be a bitter pill.

The Mexican sugar industry says that U.S. companies are destroying its business by "dumping" high fructose corn syrup, a low-cost sugar substitute, into the Mexican market. Earlier this year, at the urging of Mexican sugar producers, Mexican trade officials launched an investigation. They concluded that Archers Daniels Midland, A.E. Staley, Cargill and other corn syrup manufacturers are selling their products at below U.S. market value. Mexican sugar producers say this practice threatens their industry because soft drink bottlers and other manufacturers are converting to the much cheaper corn syrup imports to sweeten their foods. According to the National Chamber of Sugar and Alcohol Industries in Mexico City, soft drink bottlers—one of the largest consumers of cane sugar—have used 350,000 tons of corn syrup this year, which accounts

for about a quarter of the industry's total demand for sweeteners. Ninety percent of the corn syrup was imported from the United States.

In retaliation, Mexico set anti-dumping tariffs of up to 102 percent on corn syrup imports in June, while soft drink bottlers agreed to voluntary import quotas on corn syrup in September. This action has angered U.S. trade officials, corn syrup manufacturers and corn growers, who argue that Mexico is violating commitments made under NAFTA and GATT. On September 4, the U.S. trade representative's office requested a hearing at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to settle the dispute over tariffs. Negotiations are currently taking place in Mexico City.

For Mexico's 350,000 sugar workers, cheaper corn syrup imports pose a serious threat to jobs and wages. Before NAFTA, U.S. manufacturers paid a 15 percent tariff on corn syrup exports. But under NAFTA, that rate declined to 9.5 percent and was scheduled for elimination over a 15-year period. Union leaders in Mexico argue that a third of Mexico's 60 sugar mills could be closed and more than 150,000 jobs lost if the tariffs are removed. In September, workers seized a sugar mill in the state of Morelos for several days in protest against planned layoffs. Strikes across the industry were planned for November, when the Mexican sugar cane harvest begins.

In the United States, corn growers and corn



syrup producers have been crying loudly in Washington for a quick settlement. Corn growers (who are stinging from income and price supports that were slashed by the 1996 Farm Bill) are particularly worried about losing access to Mexico, the highest per capita consumer of soft drinks in the world.

The troubles began during the NAFTA negotiations, when sugar producers from both countries successfully lobbied to protect their industries by limiting sugar imports. This turned out to be the worst possible arrangement for the Mexican sugar industry, which now has to compete against virtually unlimited, cheaper corn syrup imports yet cannot sell its own product across the border. The Mexican government "gave away the ship by limiting the access of Mexican sugar producers to the U.S. market," says David Barkin, an economics professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico City.

"NAFTA has been disastrous for sugar workers in Mexico," says Bertha Luján of the Mexican Network for Action on Free Trade. "Unrestricted imports of corn syrup from the United States are threatening good jobs in one of Mexico's most important industries." ■

Peter Hannan Huge Mouth

Jeepers, Flo and Jo! Even perfect people have problems. Like which dress to wear on my date tonight, for instance.



The Big Heat

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Neoliberal ideology has reached its political apogee. Ronald Reagan gave us voodoo economics, but it took Bill Clinton and Al Gore to invent trickle-down environmentalism.

In case you missed it, in late October Bill Clinton announced his position on global warming for the International Convention on Climate Change to be held this December in Kyoto, Japan. In a nutshell, the United States will argue to the world that global warming will not stand in the way of unfettered economic growth. Polar icecaps (and Rhode Island) be damned.

The United States will renege on its previous pledge to reduce greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Despite the fact that the United States alone produces more than a quarter of global carbon dioxide emissions, the president decided that the fossil fuel lobby deserved another eight years to get its act together, calling for greenhouse gas emissions merely to "be stabilized" sometime between 2008 and 2012. In contrast, the scarcely radical European Union proposal calls for a 7.5 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2005 and a 15 percent reduction by 2010.

Clinton rejected binding emissions targets, rules with regulatory teeth and harsh sanctions for violators. In their place, he offered up a Friedmanesque economic contraption, replete with vows of voluntary compliance, tax incentives (what few are left for the loophole-laden energy industry) and a global system of tradeable pollution credits. Under this elaborate scheme, companies that close polluting factories in Illinois or Louisiana could gain credits (and probably tax abatements) to construct equally toxic plants in Honduras or Indonesia.

As for China's belligerent posture on global warming, Clinton's position was eerily simple: We can help China cut its emissions by selling them nuclear power plants. This elegant solution helps our new pal Jiang Zemin and comes to the timely rescue of Westinghouse's ailing nuclear division.

How did this come about? For starters, we are saddled with a president who has marinated for far too long in the opinions of his environmentally hostile economic gurus. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, the former Goldman, Sachs bond trader, reportedly told Al Gore at a cabinet meeting in September, "this damn global warming issue could send the economy into a death spiral."

Then there is the unsavory subject of campaign money, the crack cocaine of American politics. The energy elite has gushered more than \$54 million to both political parties in the Clinton era. Leading the way is ARCO, which has doled out a staggering \$3.5 million since 1992. In return, ARCO has enjoyed special favors from the administration, including trips to China with Ron Brown and Hazel O'Leary and a pledge by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to open the vast National Petroleum Reserve in the Alaskan Arctic to drilling. Clinton even threw a birthday party at the White House for former ARCO CEO Lodwick Cook.

The fossil fuel industry left nothing to chance. The American Petroleum Institute pumped \$13 million into an aggressive TV campaign and enlisted Donald Pearlman, one of the craftiest lobbyists in Washington. Pearlman set up an industry front group called the Climate Council, whose mission was to sabotage the Kyoto meeting. "Pearlman engages in deep lobbying," says John Passacantando of Ozone Action, the feisty D.C. group working on climate-change issues. "He is brilliant in knowing how to trip things up by getting inside, distorting the debate and monkey-wrenching the process." Pearlman's efforts paid off. A month before Clinton's announcement, the Senate voted 98-2 to oppose any binding treaty on global warming.

Despite pledges of a revived green conscience, organized labor trashed the global warming treaty, sounding apocalyptic alarms about the threat to industrial jobs. AFL-CIO

Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka labeled the treaty "stupid," correctly noting that the U.S. position doesn't place binding limits on countries like China and Mexico and would become one more excuse for U.S. companies to move offshore. Even so, labor didn't back Greenpeace's push for restrictions on developing nations. Because of this disconnect between labor and greens, another opportunity to confront the global economy that thrives on the export of jobs and pollution has been fumbled away.

"Five years ago, Bill Clinton and Al Gore accused the Bush White House of being the 'lone holdout' and an 'obstacle to progress' after it refused to support mandatory curbs on greenhouse gases," says Kalee Kreider of Greenpeace. "Now, it is Al Gore and Bill Clinton who are the obstacles."

This betrayal, along with Clinton's unconscionable stance on landmines, is yet more evidence of the U.S. government's steady degeneration from world leader to renegade. ■

**Clinton has
declared that
global warming
will not stand in
the way of
unfettered
economic
growth.**

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

City of Sisterly LOVE

Black Feminists Skip the Million Woman March

The Million Woman March, held on October 25 in Philadelphia, put many progressive black women on the spot. How could they withhold their support from an event designed to mobilize African-American women to more effectively address their specific plight? But how could they support a gathering full of the “family values” conservatism that turned many of these same women against the Million Man March two years earlier?

The march attracted anywhere from 500,000 to 2.1 million people, according to the varied estimates published in media accounts. The featured speakers included South African anti-apartheid activist Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), rapper-activist Sister Souljah and MOVE activist Ramona Africa. The event was organized by two Philadelphia women who deliberately sought to limit publicity and avoid black celebrities. Information about the march was disseminated largely through word of mouth, black radio and the Internet.

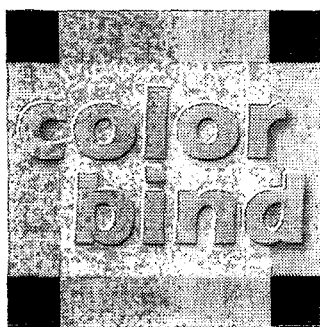
“This was a grass-roots effort from beginning to end,” says Asia Coney, who, with Phile Chionesu, conceived and successfully executed the event. Coney is an organizer rooted in Philadelphia’s dismal public housing projects. Chionesu, who owns an African arts shop, said the march was “a declaration of independence from ignorance, poverty, enslavement and all the things that have helped to bring about the confusion and disharmony that we experience with one another.” The two said they wanted the march to focus on the needs of black women trapped in poor neighborhoods where crime, drugs and

despair reign. The march’s 12-point platform echoed the nationalist-naturalist agenda that is increasingly popular in black America: It called for further investigations into charges that the CIA helped to begin the flood of crack-cocaine into black communities, the creation of support programs to help women move from prison back into their communities, the development of health facilities that focus on preventive care and alternative medicine, and the establishment of black independent schools. Issues like rape and domestic violence, long important to black feminists, were glaringly omitted.

Coney and Chionesu were determined to bypass established civil rights groups. “We especially wanted sisters who weren’t parts of any organization to take ownership of this march,” says Coney. This organizing strategy provoked considerable animosity from traditional black leaders. Feeling shut out, few national organizations offered to support the venture.

When the black press mentioned the march at all, it was usually to ridicule the unknown organizers for thinking that they could pull off such an audacious feat.

Indeed, the event was poorly organized. Organizers did not secure city permits for the march until two weeks before the gathering. Nobody answered telephone calls to the Philadelphia headquarters. Airline tickets for keynote speaker Madikizela-Mandela were purchased just days before the march. Vendor arrangements left much to be desired. But despite all these problems, the march drew one of the largest crowds in American history. Coney and Chionesu said its success far exceeded their expectations.





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Black feminists criticized the march for offering personal or spiritual solutions to institutional, secular problems.

Yet, from the beginning, the march had its serious critics. Julianne Malveaux, an economist and syndicated columnist, gently questioned the need for the march in a *USA Today* column published on the eve of the event. "Why should African-American women go to Philadelphia to participate in the Million Woman March?" she asked. "Why spend the energy and resources to come together for one day when the problems that confront African-American women and plague our communities require more than a one-day commitment?"

Malveaux also expressed suspicion about the role of the Nation of Islam in the affair. The NOI provided most of the security and, according to knowledgeable sources, kicked in some much-needed funds to help finance the march. NOI leader Min. Louis Farrakhan spoke glowingly of the event. Three women representing the Nation of Islam addressed the crowds: Ava Muhammad, a NOI attorney; Khadija Farrakhan, wife of the NOI leader; and Tynnetta Muhammad, widow of the late Elijah Muhammad. While organizers played down the

association with Farrakhan, perhaps to prevent drawing negative press coverage, Malveaux noted the connection in her column. "Some folks say it shouldn't matter—but it does for me," she wrote. "I'm disinclined to, as my grandma used to say, 'fatten frogs for snakes,' or support someone's hidden agenda in the name of 'sisterly solidarity.'"

At the march, Malveaux was singled out for ridicule in a speech by Ava Muhammad. "She sold her soul for a job," Muhammad told the crowd. "Would you condemn the God we worship just to please white people?" She went on to suggest that black people "compile a list of the traitors who are keeping us down." Malveaux views Muhammad's rebuke as further evidence of the NOI's intolerance of dissent. "Their propensity to read African Americans 'out of the race' for even mild disagreements with them is so negative that it outweighs any positive impact they have on economic development," she says.

The debate between Malveaux and Muhammad resembles a personal feud, but it is grounded in fundamental differences in

perspective about what black women need. Malveaux is a secular, left-leaning intellectual who, like many in her cohort, is attracted to feminism and troubled by the growing religiosity of the black movement. From her perspective, the Million Woman March, like the Million Man March and the Promise Keepers gathering in Washington, advocated personal or "spiritual" solutions to institutional, secular problems. Progressive black women like Malveaux are critical of the self-help spirit of current black nationalism represented by the NOI.

"These marches seem to have some therapeutic value—a kind of New Age response to the widespread anxiety we feel as a culture," says Barbara Ransby, an assistant professor of African-American Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a widely published advocate of black feminism. "In the absence of a larger political movement, it's easy for people to focus on self," she says. "But this emphasis on changing individual behavior is misplaced. We should be focused on changing the institutions and systems that shape the context for our behavior instead."

Neither Malveaux nor Ransby attended the march, and they are clear about their ideological objections to the gathering. Still, they both expressed some ambivalence. "Whenever black women come together, there is some value to be gained," Malveaux conceded. On the eve of the march, she had predicted that no more than 100,000 people would show in Philly. "I'll be honest with you. I was shocked by the huge turnout," she says. "How could I have called it so wrong? Part of my call was frustration with the poor organization and dearth of information available to interested parties. Part of it, though, was the fact that I simply underestimated the outrage and pain that so many African-American women feel about our circumstances." There are ample reasons to gather, she says, when incarceration rates for African-American women have quadrupled in the last decade and 60 percent of black women working full-time earn less than \$25,000 (compared to about half of white women and a third of all men). "But," she says, "I didn't know that we would gather for the vague platform that the Philadelphia organizers disseminated."

These sorts of complaints puzzle black nationalists. "I'm not sure I understand the feminists' objection to this march," says Farid Muhammad, executive director of the National Islamic Assembly, a consortium of "indigenous" Islamic organizations in the United States, and a professor of social and behavioral science at Chicago's East-West University. "On the one hand, they didn't like the Million Man March because of its so-called patriarchal emphasis. And now, when black women organize a march that is designed to focus on their own needs and issues, the feminists still don't like it. What exactly do we have to do to please them?"

Indeed, black feminists might have been a little too hard on the Million Woman March. If nothing else, the surprisingly high turnout—like that of the Million Man March and the Promise Keepers—reveals a powerful hunger for fraternity and sorority. Moreover, since human societies often enact "staging rituals" (or cultural pep rallies) in preparation for serious collective effort, these gatherings could presage something much more significant.

Rather than railing against the conservative biases implicit

in these "spiritual" gatherings and thus damning them as the work of enemies, progressives should try to incorporate the social disquiet they reveal into a more expansive democratic vision. Black feminists' wariness of these events is warranted. There is a danger of creeping theocracy in the routine acceptance of scriptural prescriptions; secular voices are essential to this dialogue. But at the same time, the left must learn to value "spirituality" as a valid phenomena with some thoroughly secular implications. For example, the Million Man March was criticized for being a spiritual, not political, gathering. But many analysts credited the march for drawing 1.7 million more black men to the polling booths in 1996 than in any previous presidential election. Many black women returned from the Million Woman March determined to do something in their communities to make a difference—a left organizers' dream.

Unfortunately, these issues were all but ignored by the mainstream media, which not only failed to anticipate the march but failed to analyze its consequences. Although it was one of the most massive gatherings in this country's history—and at such an unlikely location as Philadelphia—the Sunday talk shows on the day after made no mention of the event. Even Black Entertainment Television's "Lead Story," a news analysis and commentary program, didn't cover the march. The media's indifference didn't faze the organizers. "We've learned that most black people understand how the media distorts things, so we're not really that concerned about what they say about us," says Zola Aminata, the march's media liaison. "For them, it's just the same old, same old. But for us, it's a brand new world." ■

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"What the poor need is not charity, but capital, not caseworkers,
but co-workers..." Clarence Jordan, founder, 1968

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

Pacifica's **Uncivil War**

*Programming battles and labor disputes
divide the nation's premier independent radio outlet*

The Pacifica radio network is in turmoil. Veteran programmers charge that network management, under the leadership of executive director Pat Scott, is selling Pacifica's radical heritage down the river. Scott responds that Pacifica's ossified programming was endangering the network's very survival.

In the small world of independent, alternative media, Pacifica is a giant. The radio network's five stations, located in New York (WBAI), Washington (WPFW), Houston (KPFT), Los Angeles (KPFK) and Berkeley, Calif. (KPFA), reach an estimated 708,300 listeners each week, all on an annual budget of just \$9 million a year.

Yet by some accounts, the network is a failure. The listening areas of Pacifica's five stations encompass 22 percent of all American households, but only 1 percent of those households tune in during any given week. The current board and management of the Pacifica Foundation, the Berkeley-based nonprofit that owns the network, want to drastically increase the network's listening audience and its influence.

But before Pacifica can expand its audience, management believes that the network itself must change. The network's soon-to-be-released three-year plan, "A Vision for Pacifica Radio: Creating a Network for the 21st Century," puts it this way: "One barrier to our growth has been our own inability to fix ineffective—and change unsustainable—aspects of Pacifica Radio's programming, financing, and basic operations."

Critics maintain that Scott and other network executives, in a drive to increase its listening audience, are corporatizing the network's alternative culture and compromising its politics. They include Alexander Cockburn of *The Nation*, who charged in a May 5 column that Scott and the Pacifica Foundation Board planned "to eviscerate all traces of regional programming autonomy and impose the bland ideological and programming regimen that has made NPR the hideous listening experience that it is today."

Similar, if less deftly expressed, sentiments can be found on the Free Pacifica Web site (www.radio4all.org/freepacifica), where a group of ex-volunteer programmers, listeners and terminated employees are battling what they call the "regressive/corporate/fascist attitude and behavior" of Pacifica management. Lyn Gerry, a former production assistant who was fired from KPFA in 1995, paints Scott's tenure as "quite literally a reign of terror." "Essentially Pacifica has become much more liberal and much less radical," she says. "When you replace a staff of volunteer activists with so-called paid professionals, then management can exercise stringent control on the content. The incentive to keep a paycheck is a strong one."

Pacifica management insists that the changes are about attracting more listeners. "We're faced with an amazing opportunity," says Pacifica communications director Burt Glass. "There is a lot of concern about the consolidation of the media under corporate control, and even in public TV and radio you are seeing changes that are disturbing traditional supporters. On NPR, you can now hear out-and-out commercials. And for Pacifica, this opens up a door. We can fill this void of corporate-free and commercial-free programming, and that will allow us to take our independent style of news and cultural affairs to a big audience."

To reach the broader public, Pacifica management plans to rely on both improved programming and savvy marketing. In the late '80s, Pacifica and the rest of public radio discovered through research that consistent, well-produced programming on important topics increased both audiences and listener donations. Armed with this information, many station managers and program directors at Pacifica and the nation's 200 National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB) stations realigned their program schedules, offering public affairs shows that were aimed at general audiences instead of specific groups or communities.

Indeed, in its move to change programming, Pacifica management has run into opposition from programmers who have historically felt they owned their shows and time slots. (An



extreme example came in the '80s, when Mike Hodell, a programmer at KPFF in Los Angeles, died and tried to leave his time slot to his wife.) "Many displaced programmers and others at the stations were outraged that these decisions [to change programming] were being made," Lynn Chadwick, the acting general manager of KPFA and the CEO of the NCFB, told the Media & Democracy Congress in October. "The politics of self-interest came into direct conflict with the politics of community service."

Kathy Lo, KPFF's programming director, says she has been demanding "credibility, research, better-produced programming, higher technical standards and intelligent discussions" from the station's public affairs programmers. "I am trying to get the radio to talk about the news that affects listeners," she says.

Gerry at Free Pacifica maintains that KPFF management is removing programmers who do "militant African-American or Latino programming, or programming dealing with hemp issues." Lo's station manager, Mark Schubb, says this is nonsense. "They scream ideology as if that were the conflict, when it is not about ideology, it is about effectiveness," he says. "You had the strongest transmitter in Southern California being squandered for faction fights and ideological masturbation."

Schubb is particularly proud of "Up for Air," KPFF's drive-time morning show hosted by Marcos Frommer and Kathy Gori. The two-hour program begins with the headline news, and then moves into a banter period where the two hosts discuss and joke about politics and their own lives. This is followed by a series of 10, 15, or 20 minute segments that focus on either political issues or arts and culture. "They bring some irreverence to the air, instead of dour hand-wringing," says Schubb. "They break the mold of public radio, and they really compete in drive time."

At the same time that Pacifica has been remixing its programming, the radio network's management has been negotiating new contracts with the stations' unions. In 1995, Scott hired American Consulting Group (ACG), a notorious union-busting firm, to negotiate contracts with KPFF. Frommer recalls, "We sat in a meeting with this guy Glen Haynes from American Consulting Group, who said, 'This is the '90s. This is reality. Get used to it.' And then they offered us a contract in which the largest section was management rights." Pacifica later broke relations with ACG and hired a firm recommended by California unionists. Last October, after six years without a contract, Pacifica and KPFF finally reached an agreement.

"The management doesn't deal with the human resources

very well," says a worker at KPFF, who asked to remain anonymous. "Most of the decisions are made without a whole lot of input from staff, listeners and volunteers." According to the employee, "There has to be a political space in which we can talk about programming decisions and differences in programming philosophy." While KPFF workers got the wage increases they wanted in the new agreement, they gave up some control of the station's personnel operations.

Pacifica is having an even harder time coming to an agreement at WBAI in New York, where the barricades are up over who is to be included in the bargaining unit. The WBAI union currently includes 200 members, about 30 of whom are paid staff. The other 170 are volunteers, or "unpaid staff," as they prefer to be called. Pacifica wants to reconfigure the WBAI bargaining unit to include only paid staff. The union is

adamantly resisting that move. The outcome of the dispute is now in the hands of the National Labor Relations Board.

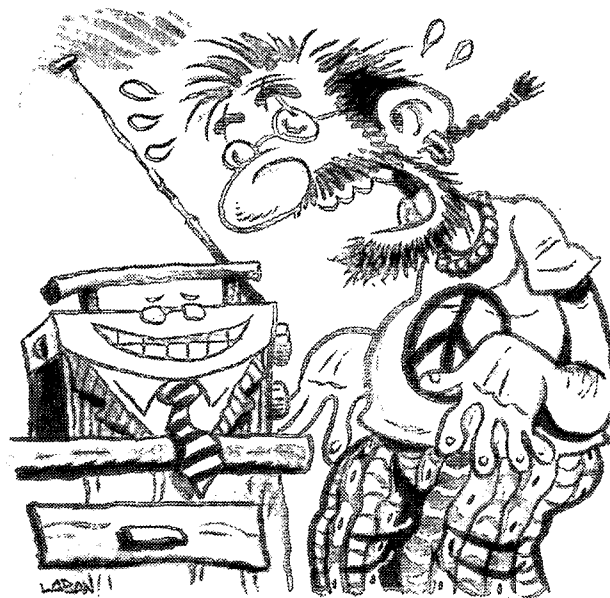
This time, control of programming is the crucial issue. Scott believes that WBAI is due for some major changes. "You look at the audience for WBAI and the station is underperforming," she says. "You have a listenership of 170,000 or 180,000 in a listening area of 20 million. It is criminal to waste this valuable resource."

Having 170 volunteers, all of whom have the rights of paid staff, in the union makes it much harder for station management to institute

changes that would enable the station to attract more listeners. Her critics, like Errol Maitland, a shop steward for WBAI workers, agree that control over programming is at the heart of the labor dispute. "Scott would like the ability to make, without notice, radical or fundamental changes in the programming and format of the various Pacifica stations," he says. "Right now, there is a constraint at WBAI, and that is the union. She would prefer to have people who she could fire at will."

Scott admits she has made mistakes, like hiring ACG without checking out the firm's bonafides. "I guess to some extent I have been awfully disagreeable and self-righteous," Scott says. But she bristles at the suggestion that she is anti-union and insists that she is squarely in the tradition of "people who want social and economic equality and justice and who are working to make that happen."

She makes no apologies for the changes that she is determined to bring to Pacifica. "Pacifica is not leading a political movement," she says, "but we are arming people in our country with information so that they can lead their own movement and take whatever action they deem necessary." ■



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what went wrong?

The Campaign Money Scandal of Teamster President Ron Carey

BY JIM LARKIN

not long ago, Teamster scandals were the work of wise guys with names like Jimmy the Weasel, Fat Tony, Tony Ducks or Tony Pro. The current one, surprisingly enough, is the work of people associated with the Democratic Party, Citizen Action, liberal unions and other progressive causes.

During the 1996 re-election drive of reformer Ron Carey, who was elected president in the union's first membership vote in 1991, the reputation and moral authority of his new, corruption-free Teamsters took a serious beating, not at the hands of his opponent, James P. Hoffa, but due to the actions of his own campaign handlers and inside-the-Beltway boosters. Their election violations prompted federal overseers to order a

re-run of the contest, scheduled to begin on February 16.

On November 17, the Teamster reform movement suffered an even greater blow when election investigator Kenneth Conboy ruled that Carey should not be allowed to participate in the re-run because he knew about improper fundraising by his campaign. Carey denies the charge and has pledged to appeal Conboy's decision.

Meanwhile, federal prosecutors in New York are continuing a criminal investigation. Three Carey associates have already pleaded guilty and face heavy fines and jail time for mail fraud, conspiracy or embezzling union funds on Carey's behalf. They are: his campaign manager, Jere Nash, a one-time leader of Mississippi Common Cause and consultant to

the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign; Martin Davis, a millionaire Teamster political adviser, who also aided the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and brokered deals for the AFL-CIO's Union Privilege credit card program; and Michael Ansara, a former community organizer and leader of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at Harvard University in the late '60s, who later became a "socially-responsible" businessman.

Other alleged participants in or casualties of this troika's illicit scheming include the Teamsters' political director William Hamilton, an alumnus of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and a former business associate of Ansara. Hamilton was forced to resign in July and now faces Teamster Independent Review Board charges of aiding the diversion of dues money to Carey's campaign—a matter that a federal grand jury in New York is also investigating. Ira Arlook, director of Citizen Action and another ex-SDSer, has run up more than \$200,000 in legal bills defending his organization against possible criminal charges over its Teamster money-laundering role. The scandal so damaged the fund-raising ability of Citizen Action's national organization that the group just closed its Washington, D.C., office and laid off 20 staffers.

The biggest potential losers, however, are Teamster members—particularly those who have worked for change in the union. In the face of beatings, black-listing, red-baiting and other obstacles to reform, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU)—labor's most durable and successful rank-and-file group—sacrificed and struggled for more than 20 years to eliminate corruption, gangsterism and sweetheart deals. The reformers' efforts finally bore fruit six years ago with Carey's victory in an election conducted as part of the settlement of a Justice Department lawsuit filed under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. Working with TDU activists around the country and a minority of local officers, Carey has since put 75 troubled locals under trusteeship, cut waste, stepped up Teamster organizing, hired aggressive new staff and won significant bargaining victories like the recent United Parcel Service (UPS) strike.

Now, the shenanigans of Carey's re-election team are overshadowing—and threatening to undo—much that he and TDU have accomplished. Hoffa, son of the union's most notorious past president, is gearing up for another bid to oust the reformers from office. Labor's recently improved public image has taken a big hit as stories about Carey's clean-up have been replaced by embarrassing media revelations about Teamster election violations. The scandal has given critics of democracy in other unions stronger arguments to use against direct election of their top officers. And

it's also created uncertainty about the future direction of the AFL-CIO because, just as Carey's 1991 victory boosted John Sweeney's chances of becoming federation president two years ago, the defeat of Teamster reformers now could undermine Sweeney's own administration.

In his ruling on Carey's eligibility, Conboy, a former federal judge, acknowledges that there is more to be investigated about Hoffa's fundraising practices. Teamster reformers argue that if diverting union dues into campaign treasuries or accepting money from employers or Teamster vendors is going to be a disqualifying offense for Carey, it should also remove Hoffa from the ballot. As *In These Times* went to press, no new candidates had emerged. Nevertheless, it's worth examining how the union's reform project became so endangered in what may yet become a full-blown tragedy for labor.

The current scandal has its roots in the later stages of Carey's first run for the Teamster presidency. There were no high-priced consultants around when he launched his original campaign in 1989. Back then, he was a Queens, N.Y., UPS local president with a reputation for honesty, militancy and independence from the corrupt power structure of the union.

He was the very definition of a "dark horse" candidate—and widely dismissed as such by labor insiders and the press.

Carey's first election effort relied almost entirely on TDU because he had so little backing within the union's bureaucracy. Only 30 out of 600 Teamster local presidents ever endorsed him. Directed by ex-United Mine Workers staffer Eddie Burke, a hero of the 1989 Pittston coal strike, the official Carey campaign was often an exercise in improvisation—constantly shored up by TDU National Organizer Ken Paff in Detroit and the group's network of experienced activists (who were heavily represented on Carey's slate). Unlike last year's fiasco, Carey's earlier run was low-budget (costing less than \$1 million) and based on the leafleting, phone-banking and organizing activity of hundreds of rank-and-file volunteers.

To reduce the official campaign's dependence on and political debt to TDU (which Carey has never joined), Burke made a fateful decision in 1991. He hired the November Group, a Washington, D.C.-based political consulting firm, and a Somerville, Mass., fund-raiser called the Share Group. The now-defunct November Group was a typical hive of liberal hustlers. Its then 30-year-old co-founder and partner, Martin Davis, got his start working for Walter Mondale. He and Hal Malchow, the firm's other principal, had a client list that included the DNC, state Democratic parties and the Clinton-Gore campaign. Their specialty was campaign strategy, fund-raising and get-out-the-vote "persuasion mail." Davis and Malchow's main contribu-

The 'Gang of Three' brought their political contacts, rich friends, telemarketing schemes and junk mail.

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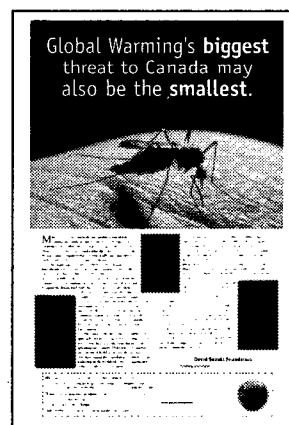
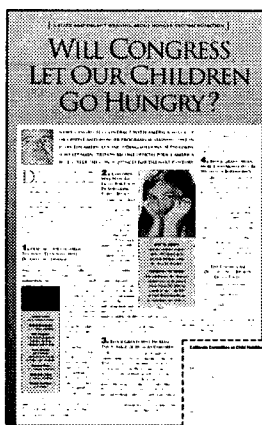
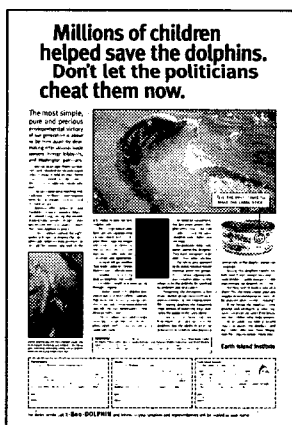
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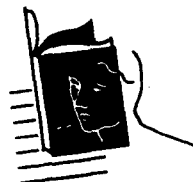
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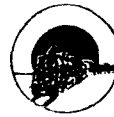
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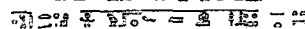
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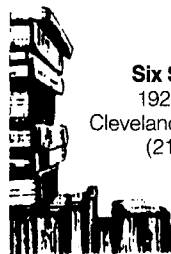
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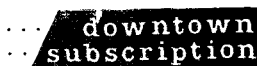


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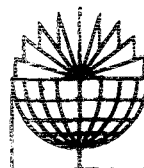
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tion to Carey's first run was a series of embarrassing ads in *The Teamster* magazine that featured photos of pigs feeding in a trough and models dressed up as cartoonish Mafia figures. Even the Carey backers most concerned about union corruption found the material crude and vacuous.

Neither the November Group or Share—founded by Michael Ansara and partly owned by Davis and Malchow—raised much money for Carey's first campaign or made big bucks off of it. But Davis and Ansara saw their work as an investment in the future. It was a foot in the door of the Teamsters' "Marble Palace" in Washington that they believed would lead to more lucrative deals after the reformers took over.

The consultants' payback wasn't long in coming. Even before Carey's February 1992 inauguration, the November Group made a failed bid to take over Teamster publications. Then the firm moved in on the union's legislative department and its \$4 million political-action fund. At Burke's suggestion, Carey hired Jere Nash to take charge of the Teamsters' "transition process." Nash's chief credential was that he had once overseen the transition team of Mississippi Governor Ray Mabus. Like his fellow political consultants, Nash had never worked for a union before, knew nothing about the Teamsters and had no connection to members or to the reform movement.

Nash, in turn, gave the November Group a key role in making recommendations about the future of the union's political program. Not surprisingly, the consultants suggested using more direct mail and consultant services. Between 1992 and 1996, the November Group billed the Teamsters for \$650,000 (and rewarded Nash by making him a contract employee of the firm). More importantly, Malchow and Davis profited from introducing their political clients—Democratic candidates in need of cash—to their new friends at the Teamsters, who had a big pile of money in the union's DRIVE (Democratic Republican Independent Voter Education) fund.

The consultants worked closely with Hamilton, who became the Teamsters' chief dispenser of hard and soft money. In this role, Hamilton thwarted any Teamster backing for the fledgling Labor Party and arranged only token giving to the New Party. His idea of independent political action was telling *Transport Topics* last January that "the Teamsters' PAC had plans to give more to the GOP" since "they control Congress" and the union wanted "to build bridges to those in power."

In the larger scheme of things within the "New Teamsters," this business-as-usual approach to politics might only have been a minor disappointment of Carey's first term. After all, Carey had, with the help of other staffers, staked out an independent position on political issues ranging from NAFTA to the merits of Bill Clinton (whom Carey refused to endorse in 1996 because of his anti-worker free trade deals). But, unfor-

tunately, Carey's vocal criticism of politicians who betrayed labor didn't translate into new DRIVE priorities that might actually affect their behavior. The union's political apparatus remained in the hands of Beltway insiders preoccupied with Democratic Party deal-making, White House invitations and congressional "access." Carey's deferral to these folks on political matters became the Achilles' Heel of his administration.

Reformers had a tougher time getting re-elected last year than they expected. Carey's crackdown on crooks and leadership perks alienated large sections of Teamster officialdom. Still-powerful bureaucrats who split their support between two "Old Guard" candidates in 1991 bankrolled a unified \$4 million challenge, fronted by Hoffa. For too long, Carey adopted a "Rose Garden" strategy in the face of this threat. He avoided the personal campaigning in the field that had made such an impact on members the first time around. This enabled Hoffa to don the mantle of the insurgent. The wealthy Detroit labor lawyer masqueraded successfully as a populist critic of a "New Teamster" establishment that was spendthrift, incompetent and run by "outsiders." To strengthen his political base and survive a July 1996 convention dominated by the Hoffa forces, Carey decided to broaden his Executive Board slate.

Some of his new running-mates delivered much-needed votes through their own local political machines. But, overall, the Carey administration's tilt to the center had a dampening effect on grassroots campaigning wherever there was tension between the rank and file and officials now allied with Carey.

Enter the "Gang of Three"—Davis, Ansara and Nash—with their political contacts, rich friends, focus groups, telemarketing schemes, junk mail and self-serving advice about how consultants like themselves could save the Teamsters from Hoffa. With Nash installed as Carey's campaign manager, they conspired to finance a costly "air war" on Carey's behalf that was viewed as a safe

political substitute for fighting it out on the ground. Their crowning achievement was a panic mailing of 1.7 million fliers sent out during a one-week period so late in the campaign that many Teamsters didn't get them until after they'd already voted while others received as many as five different Carey leaflets on the same day.

Footing the bill for this \$700,000 last-minute barrage was a big challenge. Since the bill was coming from Davis' own November Group, he took the lead in raising the necessary funds. He devised various ways of leveraging and transforming union expenditures into Carey campaign revenue through "contribution swaps." His partners in this enterprise—unwitting or otherwise—included institutions and individuals ineligible to donate money to Carey because they were union vendors, employers or relatives of either.

**It's the old
Watergate
question:
What did the
president
know and
when did he
know it?**

One of Davis' biggest overtures was to his pals at the DNC. In return for the Democrats tapping their donor list for Carey, Davis promised—and the union delivered—hundreds of thousands of dollars to state party organizations. Another deal involved Citizen Action, which suddenly got almost half a million dollars from the Teamsters directly, plus \$150,000 funneled through the AFL-CIO, for mailings last fall on behalf of its labor-backed "Campaign for a Responsible Congress." Some of this money was diverted to pay for the November Group's Carey mailings and to reimburse Ansara's wife for a \$95,000 Carey donation that Ansara unlawfully solicited from her as part of his plotting with Davis. Ansara then hit up various progressive funders, raising more than \$200,000 that Carey later had to return. Ansara also skimmed money off a \$97,000 contract he got from Hamilton to have non-union telemarketers make 150,000 calls last fall reminding Teamsters to vote for Bill Clinton and the Democrats.

Carey supporters over at the AFL-CIO were also drawn into this scheming. People who wouldn't touch Carey with a ten-foot pole in 1991—like AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and AFSCME President Gerald McEntee—fell all over themselves trying to help him this time around because of his crucial role in their 1995 palace coup against Lane Kirkland and Tom Donahue. Union staffers were reportedly pressured to give and, according to U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White, "large sums of money, including cash, were raised by officials of various labor groups for the Carey campaign." White's investigation of such transactions, which are prohibited by federal law, continues.

Carey has been questioned several times before a federal grand jury (which has also heard testimony from Sweeney and Trumka). He has pledged full cooperation with all investigators and repeatedly declared himself to be an unwitting victim of the "Gang of Three" and what Ansara calls their "misguided idealism." In the end, the criminal investigation—like Conboy's probe—will come down to the old Watergate question: What did the president know and when did he know it?

Teamster reformers were scheduled to meet November 22 in Cleveland to assess the situation at the annual TDU convention. Whether Carey remains their standard-bearer, or a replacement candidate emerges, strict new contribution rules ensure that the next round of electioneering will be much less expensive than last year's \$7 million slugfest. TDU is taking the offensive against Hoffa—this time, by exposing his ties to anti-union Republicans who held congressional hearings in October to discredit the reformers and thwart public funding of the re-run. (Taxpayers paid \$20 million for the 1996 vote; the Teamsters are splitting the tab with the government this time.)

It remains to be seen how all of this will play with the members when they get the chance to vote again. The 110,000 Teamsters employed in the trucking industry are likely to be most concerned about the Carey administration's progress in renegotiating their national contract, which expires March 31. If Teamster reformers can spearhead another UPS-style victory in freight, their electoral prospects will be greatly improved. ■

Jim Larkin is the pen name of a labor activist involved in Teamster reform activity for the last 20 years.

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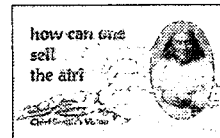
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Adding Brains to Labor's New Political Muscle

By David Glenn

If you've been reading the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page lately, you've seen the good news: The AFL-CIO, in concert with veterans of the New Left, has taken over the Democratic Party. Radicalism has rarely been stronger; the cooperative commonwealth is only a few election cycles away.

Back in the real world, away from the Dow Jones boys' nervous fantasies, we know a more sober truth: Progressive labor politics is still a weak and unsteady creature. The AFL-CIO did flex its muscles—and won some real victories—in the 1996 election. Reformers were uneasy with some elements of that effort: It was consultant-laden, media-driven and closely tied to Clinton's campaign apparatus. But labor undeniably succeeded, for the first time in years, in setting the terms of certain public debates. Who would have guessed in early 1995, as Newt Gingrich and friends took the reins of Congress, that only a year later raising the minimum wage and protecting public health care programs would be at the top of the political agenda?

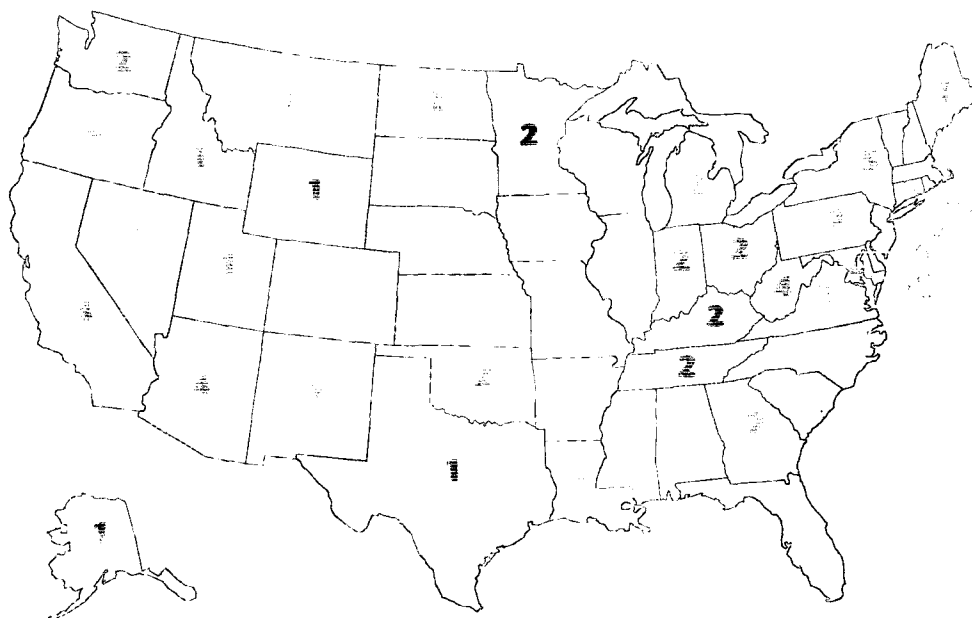
At its national convention in Pittsburgh this September, the federation unveiled an even more ambitious (and very different) program for elections in 1998 and 2000. In his keynote address to the convention, President John Sweeney promised that labor will no longer hitch its wagon to the fortunes of particular candidates and parties. Winning Congress back for the Democrats won't be a primary goal; instead, Sweeney said, "it is time for us to begin spending our money building real power by registering and mobilizing our own members." The federation's political director, Steve Rosenthal, pledged that labor would register 4 million new voters from union households, and that labor would begin to cultivate its own candidates. ("2,000 candidates in 2000" is the symbolic target.)

For those of us who dream of an effective left politics—of



President John Sweeney announced that, from now on, the AFL-CIO will endorse values and issues, not candidates and personalities.

Number of Union Cities by State



making those *Wall Street Journal* editorials come true—these are hopeful times. But the road to a viable electoral project is going to be difficult. There are two historical moments in particular that should give us pause: 1958 and 1966.

In 1958, labor learned that running a well-oiled political machine doesn't necessarily translate into policy victories. That November, in the teeth of a conservative assault on labor, the AFL-CIO organized a huge electoral program. Unions mobilized millions of voters, defeated five of six right-to-work initiatives on state ballots, elected six new liberal Democrats to the Senate and helped the Democrats gain 48 seats in the House. Yet labor lacked the power to cash in its chips in Congress. The legislation it supported—on civil rights, full employment and anti-poverty policy—was smothered in congressional committees dominated by Southern Democrats or vetoed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The story of 1966 is even more depressing. In that year—one of the few moments in history when unions were dealing from a position of strength—deep cultural conflicts within the labor movement torpedoed the left's hopes. The AFL-CIO organized an ambitious electoral program, similar to that of 1958, in order to shore up the Great Society coalition. But this time it was a failure. Local and state labor federations repudiated the AFL-CIO's endorsements in droves. To the federation's shock and dismay, millions of union members chose to sit out the election or to vote Republican. The Democrats lost 47 seats in the House. The crucial factor, most historians agree, was a grass-roots backlash against the AFL-CIO's alliances with civil rights organizations. Many white union members were more interested in resisting integration than in raising the minimum wage. So in 1966, at the apex of postwar Washington liberalism, the labor-progressive electoral alliance fired blanks.

While these two dilemmas can never be fully resolved, the federation's new political program must at least acknowledge and address them.

The labor movement currently finds itself trapped in the box of two-party politics. As long as Republican chieftains have been committed to gutting American labor law, Democrats have garnered union support simply by virtue of not being Republicans. In most races, however, Democratic candidates have little incentive to make any additional promises to labor.

In an attempt to escape this trap, American unions are taking a page out of the playbook of the Christian Coalition, which has aggressively promoted its own issues and taken control of local and state Republican party machines. "The Christian Coalition has been audacious," says Keith Kelleher, head organizer of SEIU Local 880 in Chicago. "They haven't been afraid to take their lumps. They haven't been afraid to lose. And they've moved the entire political dialogue far to the right."

From now on, Sweeney announced in Pittsburgh, the AFL-CIO will endorse values and issues, not particular candidates and personalities. Sweeney signaled that the federation plans to detach itself from the worst aspects of the mainstream Democratic apparatus. "We must stop giving money to political parties who won't give unions the respect we deserve, and we must stop supporting political candidates who won't support working families," he said. "It is time for us to begin spending our money on our own media and grass-roots lobbying around the issues that matter."

This fall's battle over giving fast-track authority to the president tested the issue-based approach. In this effort—whose success is the clearest sign yet of labor's new clout—the AFL-CIO focused purely on the issues at hand, not on the calculus of party politics. Predictably, labor's vigorous opposition to Clinton prompted accusations of disloyalty from centrist Democrats. In late October, Al From, president of the Democratic Leadership Council declared that he was "astonish[ed] ... that organized interest groups ... have chosen this moment to launch a high-profile, lavishly-funded effort to derail a

Democratic president's successful economic strategy."

The AFL-CIO is drawing on the successful experiences of progressive central labor councils, notably in Milwaukee, Atlanta and San Jose, that have changed how they relate to political candidates. "Since our local labor councils switched to an issue-based approach," says Wisconsin AFL-CIO president David Newby, "we've practically stopped giving out PAC contributions. We raise much more money than we used to, but now we pour almost all of it into educating and mobilizing our members. And there's been a palpable result in Wisconsin politics. There are living-wage initiatives on the books in Milwaukee, and more initiatives [in four other cities] are in the works. These issues never would have been on the radar screen if not for our efforts."

The South Bay AFL-CIO Central Labor Council in Silicon Valley has taken a similar approach. The council has developed economic-policy and political-education seminars for its members and interested community leaders as part of a broad effort to integrate electoral work with a general ethos of organizing. "When we go into the [1998 San Jose] mayor's race, we're going to make economic justice and the right to organize the core issues," says Amy Dean, the council's chief executive officer. Local government is already responding to labor's agenda. "The city council endorsed a boycott of a Super K-Mart store that flipped off an organizing campaign," she says.

The AFL-CIO is also flirting with third-party politics. With its focus on nonpartisan local races and its commitment to avoiding the "spoiler" role, the New Party has commanded more respect among labor leaders than any other recent third-party effort. In February, New Party leaders made a presentation to the AFL-CIO's Executive Board. In a written report on this meeting, New Party National Organizer Daniel Cantor made special note of a man who sat in the back of the room, looking "incredibly unhappy the entire time." He turned out to be Texas Congressman Martin Frost, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "He had to listen for almost two hours while the political directors of nearly every major union in America calmly discussed the New Party, fusion, and their dismay with the Democratic Party," Cantor wrote. (Wary of upsetting the Democrats, the AFL-CIO and many of its major affiliates have kept their distance from the fledgling Labor Party, which has chosen to cultivate its activist base before fielding candidates of its own.)

Meanwhile, labor will slowly be nurturing its own candidates. For the time being, the emphasis will be on races for state legislator and local office, as the labor movement builds its skills and organizational capacity. Its "2,000 candidates in 2000" rhetoric notwithstanding, labor will probably not be fielding more than a handful of its own federal candidates in the near future.

But what about the dilemma of 1966—the difficulty of sustaining progressive politics within labor's own ranks? As conservative talking heads delight in pointing out, nearly 40 percent of the AFL-CIO members who voted in 1996 pulled the Republican lever.

The two worst ways for the federation to deal with this issue

would be to ignore it or to launch a totalitarian top-down program of political endorsements and mandatory worker education. To its credit, the AFL-CIO leadership has done neither. Instead, it is talking with its rank and file. "We've borrowed 62 staff people part-time from the affiliates," says Ken Grossinger, who directs field mobilization work for the legislative department. "They spend hundreds of hours each week talking to the members, looking at poll data, learning what our members care about, searching for political issues that have traction both with the membership and in Congress."

The centerpiece of the AFL-CIO's new political program is its "Union Cities" project, which focuses on mobilizing central labor councils, the umbrella organizations of local unions. Basically, the federation offers a deal to these councils: Participating councils promise to beef up their organizing capacity (at least half of the council's affiliated locals must devote at least 30 percent of their budgets to new organizing); diversify their leadership; deepen their ties to community organizations; develop economics education programs for rank-and-file members; and build political and "street heat" networks that can mobilize at least 1 percent of the city's rank-and-file members for solidarity actions and political rallies. In return, the federation agrees to provide greater financial and staff support to the councils for their political campaigns.

Participation in Union Cities is voluntary. So far, 110 of the nation's 600 central labor councils have signed up (see map, page 23). The project, which is directed by the South Bay council's Dean, is designed to enhance bottom-up communication within the federation, and to reduce the perception that the federation's political choices are being driven by an elite corps of bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

Labor has been less successful at forging enduring coalitions with feminist, African-American, Latino, environmentalist and community-organizing groups. On the national stage, this isn't surprising: Most Washington, D.C.-based liberal and left organizations these days are hollowed-out, dues-collecting enterprises with little capacity to mobilize their memberships or to organize others. But on a local scale, things are not always encouraging either: Labor often enters coalitions as an 800-pound gorilla, with far more resources and clout than its allies.

Local unions often see labor-community alliances as a way to enlist the moral authority of religious and neighborhood leaders behind strikes, corporate campaigns and organizing drives. But labor seldom lends its support to other community campaigns. In New York City, for example, the local Jobs With Justice community coalition energetically supports labor initiatives. The city's labor movement, however, has been almost invisible in this year's upsurge of community organizing against police brutality. (In cities where the New Party is active, labor-community alliances tend to be more reciprocal, but often include only the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now and other community groups built on ACORN's high-intensity, street-mobilization model.)

Making matters worse, the labor movement sometimes makes political alliances that alienate the left's natural allies. For example, in the Staten Island congressional race this November to fill the seat vacated by Republican Susan Moli-

ari, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) poured serious resources into Democrat Eric Vitaliano's campaign, supporting him with door-to-door union canvassing and extensive phone-banking. While Vitaliano is solidly pro-labor, he is also staunchly anti-abortion and the author of New York State's death penalty legislation. (He lost the race by a margin of 62 to 38 percent.)

Dan Lucas, the SEIU's political director, downplays the importance of social issues. "Back in the '60s, these cultural questions cut very deep," he says. "But today, I look at all of our polling and I just don't see it. Abortion? Affirmative action? These just aren't a serious factor in most recent races. It's the bread-and-butter issues that are more interesting. The Republicans did so well in 1994 because they had an aggressive, quasi-populist platform that promised to give people more control over their money and their lives. And the Democrats were offering nothing. Just the status quo."

The federation has shied away from speaking out on divisive issues like gay rights, abortion and gun control. But a few progressive labor councils have taken pains to develop relationships with a broad range of community groups—even at the risk of angering their rank and file. "I had lunch with a Republican county supervisor who was facing a tough race," says Dean. "I told him what labor needed from him if we were going to stay neutral. And I also told him to lay off his opposition to a domestic registry system that our local lesbian and gay leaders are fighting for. He asked me, 'Why the hell does labor care about the domestic registry?' Well, it's principle, and it's

also because we've made an alliance. That's how you do this work. You use your political capital to bring people on board."

Labor-community coalitions also become strained when labor organizations endorse Republican incumbents, as they did this year in mayoral races in Los Angeles and New York City. As one dissident New York City trade unionist says in disgust, "The fundamental question is: Does labor see itself as a junior partner to elected officials or as a social movement?"

For the American left, the 1998 election cycle ought to be the most interesting in years—at least in the Union Cities. But the labor movement faces severe obstacles as it moves toward an issue-based politics. It's not yet clear how broadly the successes in Wisconsin and South Bay will be imitated by other labor councils. And in a time of economic growth and low unemployment, it will be tough to export a workers-rights agenda to middle-income districts. Labor also faces new flak from the right: Next November, for instance, Californians will vote in a referendum that would ban labor contributions to political campaigns.

But labor can't afford to stop experimenting with new tactics. As Stewart Acuff, the director of the Atlanta Labor Council, puts it: "We have a Democratic Party that isn't unified with us on our core issues. They do things to us that the Republicans would never do to the Christian Coalition. Inside or outside the party, we have to have our own apparatus that affirms our issues. We've got to find a way out of this box." ■

David Glenn is associate editor of Dissent.

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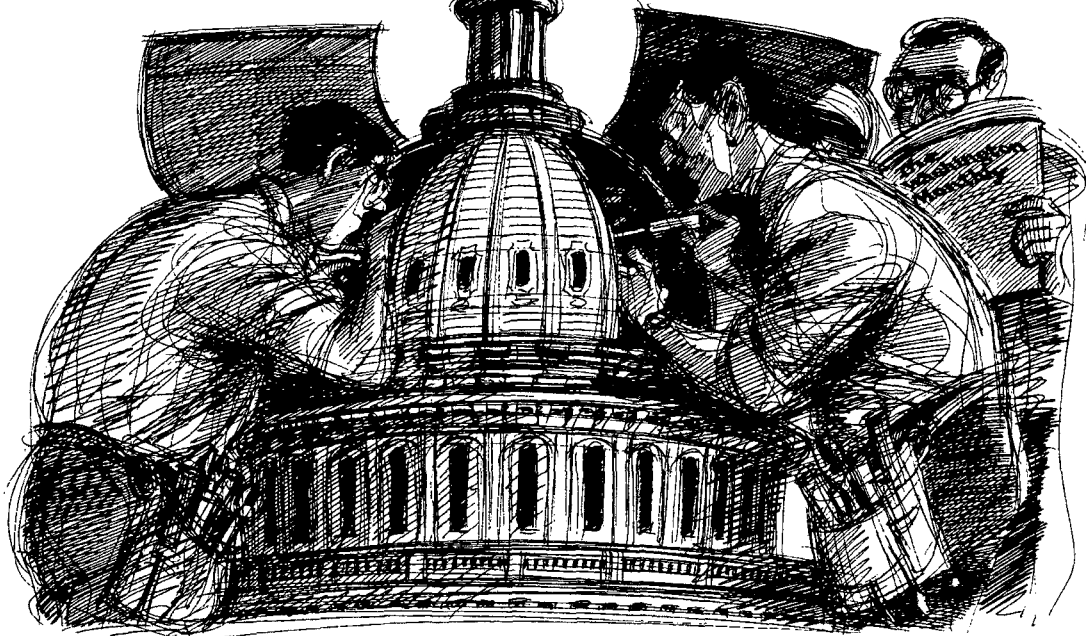
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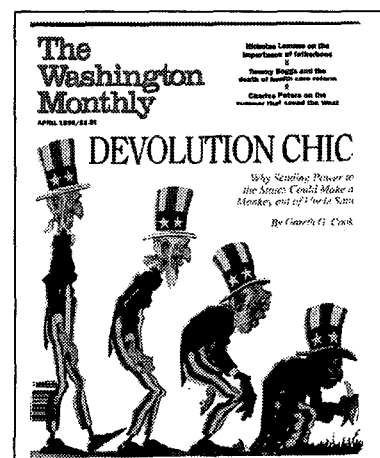
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Move 'em Out

President Clinton claims welfare recipients are moving into the world of work, but the reality looks more like a giant game of musical chairs.

By Neil deMause

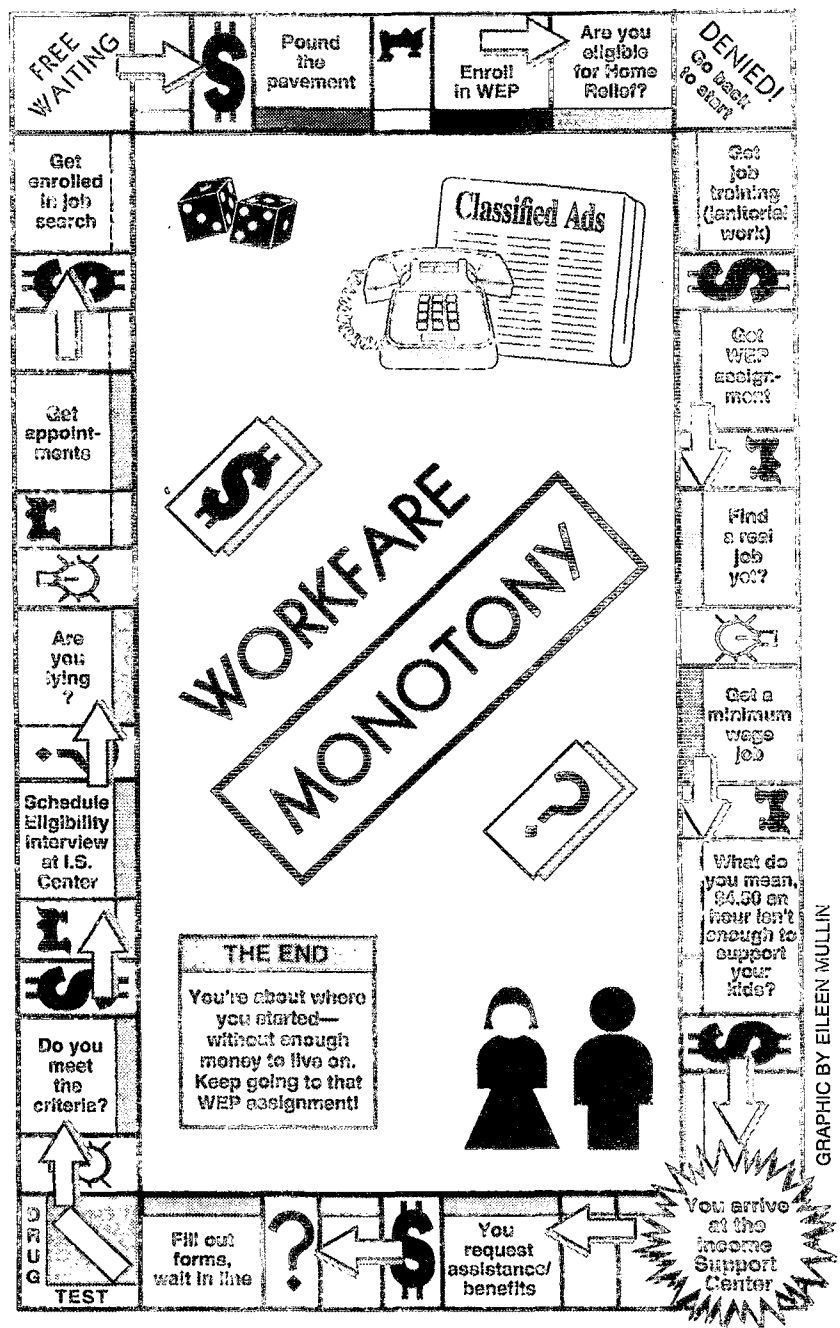
Alesha Nicholson is one of Bill Clinton's welfare-reform success stories. Until last winter, the Milwaukee single mother was dependent on welfare benefits. She has since become one of the 1.4 million people who left the welfare rolls between August 1996 and last May, a statistic that led to Clinton's triumphant August announcement that "The debate is over. We know welfare reform works."

Nicholson accomplished this feat by opening her mail. "I was on welfare," she says. "I was told to do 15 job contacts a week, which I did. I complied with everything I was told to do." But the letter that arrived last December charged that Nicholson had failed to file a monthly report on her wage earnings (at the time, zero). She insists she filed the form; the state disagreed and cut off her benefits.

In the terminology shared by welfare bureaucrats and recipients, Nicholson had just been "sanctioned"—removed from the welfare rolls for violating the increasingly byzantine regulations. Finding a short-term factory job to pay the rent, but unable to afford childcare, she was forced to send her three-year-old daughter to stay with out-of-town relatives, where the child was sexually abused.

Nicholson later retrieved her daughter and found part-time work at Welfare Warriors, a Milwaukee-based welfare mothers' activist group. There she discovered that the Opportunities Industrialization Center, the private agency that had handled her welfare case, had been directed to reduce its caseload by 25 percent annually, or face losing its lucrative state contract. Every public and private welfare agency in the state received the directive in February 1996. One way or another, all but one met the quota.

Even as Clinton, Mickey Kaus and other would-be welfare reformers insist that the 1996 Personal



GRAPHIC BY EILEEN MULLIN

Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act—which freed states from the requirement to provide aid to all needy residents—has worked wonders in bringing the nation's welfare recipients into the working world, stories like Nicholson's indicate otherwise. States are just starting to implement programs designed under the new law. But in the months before signing the law, Clinton quietly granted waivers to 43 states, allowing them to experiment with such policies as rigid time limits and workfare for single mothers. It is these state programs that are credited with the startling 24 percent drop in the welfare rolls, a total of 3.4 million people, since the start of Clinton's first term.

Exactly how this was accomplished is an official mystery. The White House doesn't even claim to know. Domestic policy adviser Bruce Reed could only speculate that "most have probably gone to work or gotten married so that their income no longer makes them eligible." The only national study to date, released by the federal Council of Economic Advisers in May, chalked up 44 percent of the caseload drop to an improved economy, and 31 percent to the effects of workfare and other new restrictions. The other 25 percent were marked simply "other factors."

Welfare recipients and advocates for the poor agree that the economy has improved. But as for workfare and those "other factors," they paint a gloomier picture. Like Alesha Nicholson, many welfare recipients are discovering that the only work skill valued by the new welfare regime is the ability to jump higher and higher hurdles on the road to a monthly check.

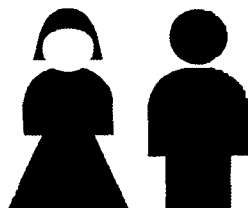
If there is a single entity that has been universally reviled by all parties in the welfare debate, it is the welfare bureaucracy: the tangled web of caseworkers and auditors that, recipients and welfare critics agree, siphons off valuable dollars without helping people achieve self-sufficiency. (Long Island welfare activist Therese Scofield has estimated that a single welfare case has to pass through at least 20 people.) Yet, this system has been the prime beneficiary of welfare reform.

Wisconsin, where Gov. Tommy Thompson has built a political career on welfare-busting, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's New York City have been among the pioneers of cutting the welfare rolls by any means necessary. Since Giuliani's election in 1993, the city's welfare office has spawned a dizzying array of programs designed to bump people off welfare. There is EVR, the Eligibility Verification Review, where recipients are grilled to ensure they actually deserve services; failure to show up is considered an admission of guilt. Those who clear that hurdle are sent to OES, the Office of Employment Ser-

*If you keep
requiring people to
jump through more
hoops ...*



*... you're going to
get them off
welfare faster.*



vices, which, notes Liz Krueger of the Community Food Resource Center (CFRC), a New York-based anti-hunger organization, "spends more time calling people in and out of appointments just to check off that they didn't get there than they do on anything related to preparing people for work." Applicants must begin performing workfare before their cases have even been opened. At each step, missing even a single appointment will get you sanctioned and sent to the back of the line to reapply.

"You put all these things together, and you get what I call the Rudy Effect," says Krueger. "If you keep requiring people to get through more hoops, and you keep giving them fewer and fewer options of how to get through the hoops, you're going to get them off faster and you're going to keep them off."

At St. John's Bread and Life, a food pantry in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, N.Y., Charles Stroud takes a break from his meal of bread and noodle soup to tell how he mistakenly received two different appointments to undergo a medical evaluation as part of EVR; when he missed the second appointment, the city sanctioned him. In order to regain his \$240 a month in benefits, Stroud must apply for a hearing and then wait an additional 45 days for his case to be reopened—time that will be counted against his five-year lifetime limit on welfare benefits. "All it takes is punching this key and that key, and you're out," he says. "It takes them three

minutes to cut you off, yet it takes them 45 days to put you on. That's insane."

Workfare has proven to be easily the most effective way of getting people off welfare—but not of moving them into paid employment. A CFRC study of New York City's Work Experience Program (WEP) estimated that just one-tenth of one percent of participants had found permanent employment directly after leaving the program. The city, which claimed that 18 percent had found jobs, turned out to have been counting people whose cases had been closed for missing an appointment as "successfully placed in employment." As many as 40 percent of all participants in WEP are sanctioned annually for one violation or another.

"The city doesn't really know whether or not WEP is successful, because they don't track how many participants find jobs," says Ben Dulchin of WEP Workers Together, a group that organizes workfare participants. "They've just made WEP and welfare so awful that people will do anything, including take a lousy minimum-wage job with no benefits that actually gives them a worse life, because they don't want

to go through the degrading process of welfare."

Milwaukee's Ruby Thompson found that out the hard way. Working at a workfare placement—in a factory that, according to the Welfare Warriors' Pat Gowens, is owned by the same agency that placed her there—Thompson had a red-hot metal plate fall on her hand, burning it to the bone. After six days in the burn unit, during which she received skin grafts to her forearm, hand and three fingers, Thompson was again called in for workfare placement. "I told them I cannot be there in the morning because I have therapy," she recalls. "I have to get my hand back to where I can use it. The guy told me, 'We don't care, you have to be here or else.' So I took the 'or else.'"

Across the country in Eastport, N.Y., Jane Stango Boyd was preparing for her first semester studying physical therapy at Suffolk Community College when a notice arrived directing her to report for workfare. The young mother of two missed her appointment because she was in Family Court that day, fighting the abusive husband she left last year, first for a domestic violence shelter and ultimately for welfare. She was promptly sanctioned for not showing up. She now faces the possibility of losing her \$360 a month in food stamps and cash assistance, and being evicted from her state-subsidized apartment.

Stango Boyd, who has 85 percent hearing loss, explains that she has been told that because the workfare program has no supervisors for the deaf, she will instead be assigned to do filing for eight hours a day. "How's that going to help me get a job in the future, when the five-year time limit is up?" she asks.

Other welfare recipients have been thrown off the rolls under the aegis of "fraud detection" for infractions as small as failing to report a gift of diapers. Cheryl Ek, of the Utah-based economic justice group JEDI Women, recalls one help-line caller who was sanctioned for welfare fraud because her mother had paid for her to take a bus to California for a visit, and she hadn't reported it as income. Ginny Niebling, a Bellport, N.Y., woman, has been similarly caught up in the crack-down on fraud. Last year, the county Special Investigative Unit charged her with failing to list a four-week job she had three years earlier on a single recertification form, though she had reported it elsewhere. Niebling was working and off welfare by then, but the government refused to drop the charges. Now out of work once again, she can't even get bus money from the county for job interviews because the pending fraud charge makes her ineligible for benefits.

While cities and states that slashed welfare rolls have not yet seen the expected flood of visible homelessness and hunger, there are worrisome signs lurking around in the shadows of official statistics. Eighty-four percent of New York City soup kitchens and food pantries report increased demand for services; they turn away 2,400 people daily, nearly double the figure from five years ago. In Milwaukee, which accounts for 60 percent of Wisconsin's welfare caseload, the number of families in homeless shelters last winter was up about 25 percent over the previous winter. Meanwhile, a *New York Times* report on the suddenly widening wage gap between men and women notes in passing that welfare reform,

in forcing poor mothers into low-paying jobs, may be partly responsible for the reversal of the decades-old trend.

In fact, many of the 1.4 million people Clinton cited may not have gone anywhere, except to the back of the line to reapply. Since the government tracks only the total caseload, not which individuals are relying on welfare, the reduced numbers may represent merely an ever-changing pool of people waiting out temporary sanctions. This is the phenomenon known as "churning," explains Krueger, which is like "a game of musical chairs where we still have 12 poor people, but we only have eight chairs out."

Reducing caseload, concludes Krueger, isn't difficult "if you're the government and get to control the intake valve and the push-out valve." The only thing that's changed, she says, is that "lots of people previously didn't think it was okay to do that. It might even have flown in the face of what they believed was their mission."

But that, she says, was back when the government still thought part of its mission was helping poor people. ■

Neil deMause is co-author of *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money Into Private Profit*, forthcoming from Common Courage Press.

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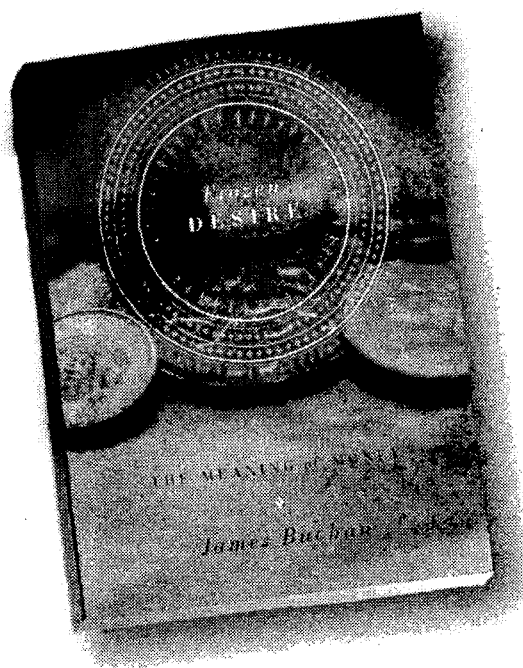
**Frozen Desire:
The Meaning of Money**

By James Buchan

Farrar, Straus & Giroux

320 pages, \$25

REVIEWED BY CHRIS LEHMANN



We all know we are supposed to make money, but what exactly are we to make of it? The fabled cash nexus is strangely insubstantial, as any cursory glance at the history of the great fortunes of Messrs. Milken and Soros will quickly confirm.

Money is, in many respects, the original floating signifier, bulwarked by elaborate philosophical justifications and colossal human sacrifices. But it's not an objective measure of value. It lives only in exchange, in relation to what it can procure or how prodigiously it can multiply itself. The bedrock permanence ascribed to it by devout hoarders and the apparatchiks of monetarism is neurotic delusion.

Yet the very unreality of the thing makes it devilishly hard to explain. How is it that our common world has been conscripted into the uncritical, nay craven, worship of a symbol—an object that in real terms, as the protagonist of the Edgar Ulmer noir classic *Detour* put it, is a lousy piece of paper full of germs?

This is the starting point of James Buchan's gracefully written study,

Frozen Desire, a book that traces the rise and rise of money across the ages via selected case studies from the histories of well-known cash economies. Buchan, the author of several novels and a co-author of a history of the house of Saud, frames his disquisition with personal testimony: His opening chapter depicts his early life as a production worker for an English-language Saudi newspaper, when the Arabian economy was in the first flush of the great monetary efflorescence that came with the rise of OPEC in the '70s. In an Orientalist redux of the Marxian notion of degraded labor, Buchan recounts how bartering his time for cash turned out to be a raw deal. Saudi society, long mired in a medieval monarchy, had not yet locked into the global market economy; there wasn't much he could buy with his money. Buchan's paydays were only painful and humiliating reminders that his lost youth couldn't be ransomed.

From this set piece, Buchan draws one of the morals that propels the diverse case studies of *Frozen Desire*: Money represents a form of consent of

the governed—or, as he puts it, “a deep, almost unbreakable, social relation.” By using a society's money, Buchan argues, we cast a vote in favor of the social relations that prevail in a money economy. Money didn't mean much in the Saudi Arabia of 1978, for the simple reason that the social relations had yet to catch up with the currency.

It's an intriguing notion, which among other things rescues the idea of money from flatfooted neometalist defenses of its object utility. Acknowledging the hidden social contract within monetary relations provides a useful way of demystifying these connections. Yet Buchan's book is strangely silent on one of the more notorious, coercive features of a money-driven social order: that those who lack the stuff are deprived the option extended to its masters to vote early and often. The squalid debauchery of our national political fund-raising system is just one of the more flamboyant recent demonstrations of this long-established truth.

Buchan, a sensitive student of money's variable meanings, is aware of

such consequences of a money economy. In a later chapter, he notes that the City of Glasgow Bank ruined one of his Scottish ancestors. But he's simply impatient with money's more distinctly political expressions. Attaching political significance to money is, for Buchan, only another stage in the history of the financial medium itself, not a reliable calculus of its impact on the world.

Buchan treats any politicized notion of money, in other words, as so much Marxist blather. Marx's whole effort to set forth a philosophy of money receives a haughty and dismissive interpretation. Buchan contrasts Marx's abstruse reckonings about the money system with the abject poverty in which he kept his family—the Marx chapter bears the lurid title “Death in Dean St.” To be sure, there was much that was crude and often outright mistaken in Marx's industrial-age inquiries into the nature of money. But his thoughts did signal an important effort to make sense of the fledgling capitalist order via the academic discipline of political economy (a field split in two and frenetically professionalized shortly after the onset of the Industrial Revolution, to the detriment of politics and economy alike). And what, finally, are we to conclude about Marx's poverty, except that the scholar's lot is often a bitter one? It seems rather fanciful to imply, as Buchan's tone clearly does, that if Marx understood money so well, why wasn't he stinking rich?


It is, indeed, Buchan's own reluctance to reach any surefooted moral conclusion on his hydra-headed topic that gives *Frozen Desire* its own not-altogether-unmonetary weightless feel. (This reluctance may also explain Buchan's effort, in his concluding chapter, to restate the book's principal themes—the sort of exercise that suggests a writer is still in the process of making up his or her own mind.) We learn in arresting detail of the great Dutch tulip bulb speculation of the 17th century (when, in one celebrated episode, an entire fortune was quite literally gobbled up in the mistaken belief that a tulip bulb was an onion). There's also an extended study of the career of master financier/Scottish rogue John Law, who launched a bold, Milken-like

bid to re-leverage and centralize the enormous national debt of Regency France in the early 18th century. But we're never quite sure what these studies in speculative frenzy are meant to add up to—apart from the obvious lesson that money values always exist in a state of odd detachment from the world at large, and ultimately from their own ability to gain obeisance from their most passionate partisans. Yet at some point, this observation has to open onto larger questions of moral and political preference. Do we want a society in which tulip bulbs are identified with the greater social good? Or, to update matters a bit, is the best economic policy the one that will continue to enrich investors, bond traders and the creditor class?

The language of money, as we have learned to speak it, allows no room for such questions. But how that language gradually overmastered so many other concerns of public well-being would itself be a worthy study in financial genealogy. Nor would this prove an idle exercise in academic speculation: Much of American political history has con-

cerned the proper uses of money in the American democratic experiment—from the heated pronouncements on the “monster Bank” brandished by Jacksonian Democrats in the 1830s to the Populist Subtreasury system of the 1890s, to the statist Progressive vision that created the now-omnipotent Federal Reserve. And the gradual decoupling of the rhetoric of money from the commonweal corresponds all too closely with the atrophy of anything resembling a democratic politics in this country.

Buchan, who is so closely attuned to the shifting vagaries of money within what he calls its “floating world,” could have turned his finely wrought prose to more provocative ends had he engaged such questions directly. Instead, his book ends with an odd “valediction,” forecasting the end of the Age of Money, as though it is destined to become some quaint aesthetic movement, like Imagism or Fauvism, to be nudged inexorably off the historical stage. Would that it were so. But while money has bequeathed to us many a floating world, the one in which it is sovereign is all too real. ■



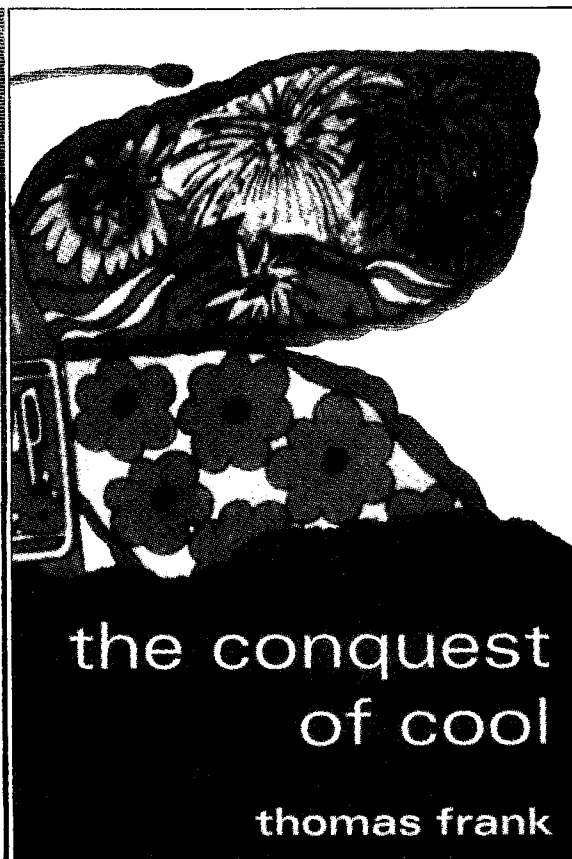
Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism

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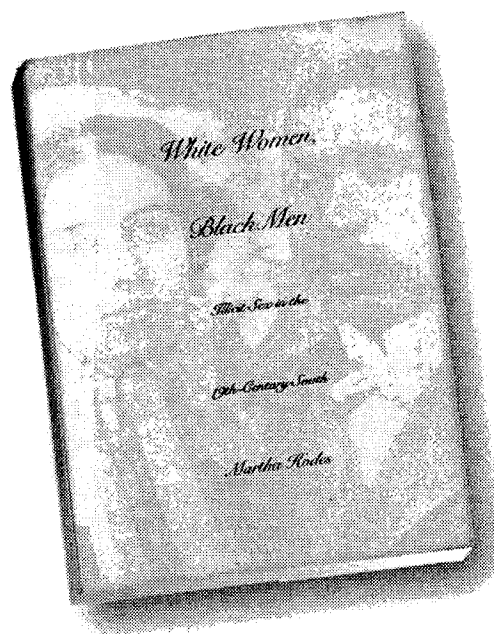
White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South

By Martha Hodes

Yale University Press

325 pages, \$30

REVIEWED BY CATHY MASON



Despite its titillating title, Martha Hodes' scholarly study seriously examines the heretofore unexplored territory of sexual relationships between those women and men traditionally regarded as the most pampered and the most persecuted inhabitants, respectively, of the antebellum South. Delving back as far as colonial sources, the author found that such liaisons were better countenanced in the slave South than historians have assumed, given the traditional historical perception of sex between black men and white women as a potent social taboo. Indeed, until the Civil War, Southern white society remained more or less complicit in these sexual relations.

This uneasy tolerance, Hodes found, gave way to white rage only with black emancipation and the subsequent threat of "social equality." Late 19th-century black activists such as Ida B. Wells and W.E.B. Du Bois observed that lynching emerged as a post-Civil War phenomenon. They understood that such virulence reflected a change in white attitudes about what the black man rep-

resented as a slave and as a free man. The subject of lynching has been important to scholars of women's history since Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's 1979 study, *Revolt Against Chivalry*, which outlined the women's campaign against it. Simply put, after the Civil War, Southern white society used the protection of white women's virtue as an excuse for lynching when, in fact, it was used to "suppress the colored vote by intimidation and murder," according to Wells.

Hodes found source material for her thesis concerning antebellum illicit sexual relations not in casual correspondence or even personal journals but in legal records. Court proceedings usually came long after the fact and involved not the issue of illicit sexual conduct but whether the offspring of those unions should be considered slaves or free. Court testimony suggests that the local white community knew and kept publicly silent, if privately appalled, about its local scandals. Still, tolerance did not mean placid acceptance. Moreover, white neighbors viewed a black man's relationship with a white woman differ-

ently depending upon the class of the woman and the perceived threat to the social patriarchy.

Not surprisingly, Hodes found no stories about plantation mistresses who ran off with slaves; such liaisons would not have been tolerated. However, if the woman in the affair was a servant, or at least not a member of the planter class, neighbors (white and perhaps black) often chalked up the relationship to her natural promiscuity. Whites were outraged when Wells later asserted that Southern whites should look at what their women were up to before persecuting black men. But Wells' statement looks ironic in light of the court testimony given by whites before the Civil War. Although it is difficult to separate class from patriarchy in slave culture, we must assume that the preservation of slavery itself was even more important than the idealization of white women. Those who benefited from the system were free to think what they liked about black men consorting with white women, but the slave was, above all, valuable property.

Hodes divides her book into two parts, covering the years before the Civil War and the period of the war and Reconstruction. The early chapters, which are the study's best, present three court cases that treat marriage, alleged rape and adultery involving Southern white women and black men. An enlightening early case involving a married couple reveals that servitude, slavery and race were once negotiable terms.

In 1681, Eleanor Butler, an Irish servant of Lord Baltimore, received his consent to marry a slave named Charles. Perhaps because of their union, Baltimore used his influence to change Maryland law regarding black and white marriages to insure that a white woman who married a slave would herself remain free and bear free children. Eleanor and Charles went about their lives little affected by the law, but over 50 years later, their story emerged as a test case when their grandchildren sued for—and won—their freedom based upon their maternal white roots.

The early 19th century is represented by a case in which a slave named Jim is convicted of raping a white woman even though he and the woman in question, Polly Lane, had been seen many times together by local whites and blacks. When Lane turned up pregnant, the court inexplicably reversed its decision and pardoned Jim. In both this instance and in the third case, where a white man unsuccessfully tried to divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery with a black man, it was the woman who was judged to be the sexual aggressor.

Interestingly, race was not the central issue in these two examples, but even in instances where it was, Hodes' research shows that throughout the antebellum era, the courts conducted civil debates based upon individual circumstances in matters concerning sexual liaisons between white women and black men.

The stories, incomplete as they are, are useful, given that many people feel ambivalent about interracial relationships even today. However, Hodes provides little specific social context, and she fleshes out none of the cases with more general contemporary political, religious or legal opinions on the subject of race.

Hodes enters more familiar territory

when her study moves to the Civil War era when the term miscegenation (the mixing of races) enters the language, threatening private behavior with ominous social and political consequences. Scholars have long understood that demonizing the black man and idealizing the white woman represented two sides of the same patriarchal coin. These conceptions dehumanized individual men and women and justified extreme responses to illicit relations. Hodes' essential contention is that "black freedom brought a marked shift away from uneasy white toleration for sex between black men and white women, and a move toward increasingly violent intolerance." With such a commonplace thesis, she breaks no new ground with most of her material on lynching and racial attitudes in the second half of the century.

Hodes handles well the construction of sexual images of men and women of each race and class both before and after the Civil War as well as the social and political uses to which those images

were put. Yet her thesis gets muddled as the central point shifts from the attitude of white Southerners concerning liaisons between white women and black men before the war, to the political meaning of violence against black men in general after the war.

Hodes acknowledges in the introduction that only the "shards and bones" of a story exist in the historical record, and, indeed, no fully articulated story emerges here. She writes that she was inclined to write a novel featuring the antebellum relationship between a white woman and a black man, but that after her research revealed contrary conclusions, she realized that the work had to be "told first as history."

Certainly, she could have outlined those conclusions in a journal article. Both the scholar and the general reader might have preferred an accessible and dramatic novel on the same subject. ■

Cathy Mason is a historian and writer, specializing in cultural and women's history.

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A Buddhist on Death Row

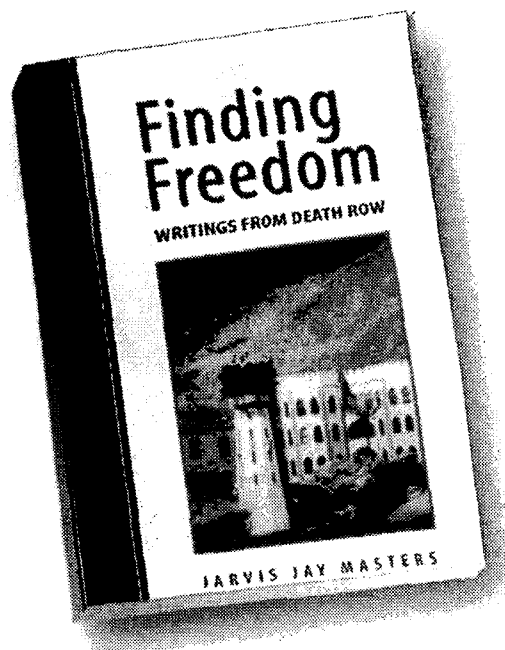
**Finding Freedom:
Writings from Death Row**

By Jarvis Jay Masters

Padma Publishing

179 pages, \$12

REVIEWED BY DOUGLAS IMBROGNO



In *Finding Freedom*, an African-American death row inmate describes his unlikely spiritual transformation to Buddhism under the shadow of state-sanctioned execution at San Quentin.

Jarvis Jay Masters arrived in prison with the same resume as a generation of young black men. Coming from a drug-wrecked family, he saw and experienced harsh physical and mental traumas. He bounced among relatives, foster homes and institutions, turning street-smart and mean. At 17, he went on a crime spree, sticking up stores and restaurants and landing in San Quentin. He never shot anyone, Melody Ermachild Chavis writes in the foreword, "[but] I'm glad I wasn't in Taco Bell when he came through."

Masters, 36, landed on death row for his part in a 1985 conspiracy to murder a San Quentin correctional officer. Though locked in his cell at the time of the killing, Masters was accused of sharpening a piece of metal for the "spear man" who stabbed the officer.

As they met to fashion his appeal, Chavis, a defense investigator, helped Masters hone an unexpected gift for writing. Much of the book features punchy, often powerful vignettes of prison life. Reconstructed conversations are laced with jive, profanity and the

tough-guy bonding of men with common grievances, fates and wounds.

Masters describes a prison shrink in a blue suit and red hat who materializes on the "crazy tier," where Masters lands in a stinking cell with a dead rat in the toilet.

"Hey, cell fifty-nine," coos the psychiatrist, offering bounty from his pockets stuffed with medication:

'How about this tiny blue one. This is Mellaril. But I also have ... let's see, Prolixin and Cogenitin. But these here,' he admitted with a doctor's frown, 'I'm not so sure of. Most folks prefer these blue Mellaril to the Sinequan.'

Masters sends him packing. But he can't so easily avoid the craziness all around him. There is Milton, imprisoned, mostly in solitary, for the past 11 years. He's angry because the "psych" thinks he's "thirteen sixty-eight," or crazy.

"What do you think, are you crazy?" Master asks. "Could you make it out there in society, Milton?"

"Hell, nah!" Milton responds. "Man, don't you know that in these past eleven years I have lived like a mad, wounded elephant? I have been shot, shot at, hit with clubs, blackjacked, gassed, choked, Tasered, cut, bruised, and

stabbed four times!"

Payback is coming, he warns. "All they have to do is spring me loose, and boy oh boy, when they do, I made only one promise to myself—not to do anything that nobody hasn't done to me." Milton is discharged the following month.

Masters, too is filled with anger. Young men like him find a support group behind bars. "This place welcomes a man who is full of rage and violence," he writes. "He is not abnormal here, not different. Prison life is an extension of his inner life."

As Masters sits in a holding booth waiting to hear his death sentence, Chavis gives him an article to read by Tibetan lama Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, "Life in Relation to Death." Masters writes: "I thought, 'Wow! This is right up my alley.'"

On death row, he begins taking "the many steps from extreme anger to the clarity of my Buddhist practice." Regular insight meditation requires diligence and discipline under any circumstances, but Masters' task is daunting. He rises at 4:30 a.m. to a quiet prison. He folds a blanket and sits on the concrete floor. Frosty, refreshing air wafts into the cell-block through a broken window, and the prison yard outside seems "so placidly beautiful under the heavy, watchful

lightbeams of the gun towers." He sits for 45 minutes, breathing softly, entering a state of relaxation and awareness:

It was as if my whole life was being displayed on a screen during the death penalty case. Things I had never realized about myself and my life. ... Questions I had never asked my mother—like how long she'd been abused, on the street, an addict—were being asked now. Through meditation I learned to slow down and take a few deep breaths, to take everything in, not to run from the pain, but to sit with it, confront it, give it the companion it had never had.

A roar erupts from a nearby cell: "Feed me or come f— me up!"

Another inmate shouts back: "Can't you see people are trying to sleep around here?"

"You aren't calling the shots around here, punk," calls the first voice. "When they rack these bar gates and all the cells come flying open, we'll see just who the real bitch is, me or you, punk."

So starts a new day.

Meditation is often seen as escapism. To the contrary, a Buddhist meditation is intended as a lifelong endeavor toward greater awareness of the world, insight into how people create their own suffering and compassion for others, as Masters begins to discover: "I've learned more about the things I don't want to do: cuss out other prisoners or guards, argue for two hours about whether or not the lunch meat is spoiled. ... Every effort I make to love means I don't have to feel hatred."

He styles himself a "peace activist," risking being knifed when a homophobic inmate, Crazy Dan, stalks a gay man who wanders into the wrong yard. Masters warns the man off but feels far from triumphant as he wryly notes: "Does this mean that I, the Lone Buddhist Ranger, am expected to try to stop this madness by myself? ... I can't stop it. There are stabbings every day in this place. All I have is my spiritual practice."

Too often, political progressives become enraptured with high-profile inmates who seem useful to their causes. Such infatuation can be dangerous. Norman Mailer and others championed

Jack Abbott, whose gut-wrenching book on prison life, *In the Belly of the Beast*, they widely praised. When Abbott went free, he promptly killed a restaurant waiter.

But Masters actually seems to have awakened from self-delusion, violence and self-hatred. He hopes readers "will see through my writing a human being who made mistakes. Maybe my writing will at least help them see me as someone who felt, loved, and cared, someone who wanted to know for himself who he was."

Masters' story could be used to further several causes: prison reform, social equality or bolstering black families. Yet *Finding Freedom* also confronts readers with the truly radical Buddhist notion of taking full responsibility for your own karma (the Buddhist notion that how a person thinks and acts in the present is the accumulated result of choices from his or her past). The aim

is to awaken to moment-to-moment responsibility for your life, as Masters seems to have finally done.

As his teacher, Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, writes in the afterword to *Finding Freedom*:

We must first recognize the source of our pain. Nothing is accomplished by blaming God, or parents, or the police, or outer enemies. ... To acknowledge our own karma as the cause of our experience empowers us to purify it and transform our future. To understand that we are not unique in our suffering, to look for a way to reduce suffering for ourselves and others, gives birth to authentic compassion, beyond mere pity.

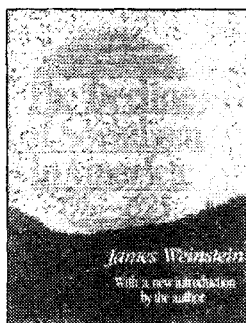
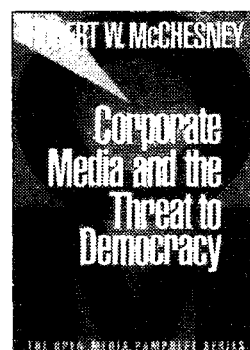
Authentic compassion—now there's a cause to get behind. ■

Douglas Imbrogno edits the Buddhist journal *Hundred Mountain*.

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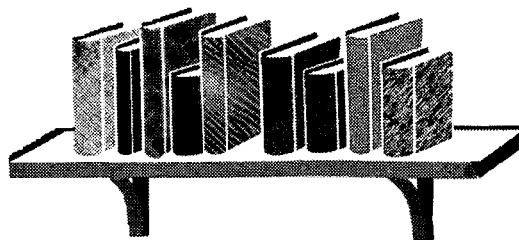
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Mad Cow U.S.A.:

Could the Nightmare Happen Here?

By Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber
Common Courage Press
246 pages, \$24.95

REVIEWED BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

From the New Guinea highlands to the halls of academe, investigative journalists Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber explore the history of a strange, little-understood brain disease, transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE). The most well-known TSE, mad cow disease, has decimated the British cattle population over the past decade. A variant of mad cow disease has spread to Britain's human population. Time will tell how many people will die from having eaten infected beef products.

Forty years ago in New Guinea, another strain of TSE, Kuru, plagued a tribe of cannibals. Rampton and Stauber introduce scientist Carleton Gajdusek, who found that this mind-ravaging and ultimately fatal disease was transmitted by eating human brains. Kuru disappeared when the aborigines abandoned their people-eating ways.

Rampton and Stauber point out that British mad cows got the disease from eating their infected cousins in the form of feed supplements made from ground-up livestock.

Mad Cow U.S.A. is particularly strong in its account of the uphill battles the U.S. government's own scientists waged convincing the Department of Agriculture to ban cannibalism in the livestock industry. They warn of the danger of allowing food-industry lobbyists dictate the way the government regulates the nation's food supply. "If we let industry set the rules," they write, "there will literally be no limit to what we'll swallow, and the nightmare of mad cow disease—or something just as bad, or worse—not only *can* happen here, but almost certainly *will*." ■

Leo Strauss and the American Right

By Shadia B. Drury
St. Martin's Press
248 pages, \$35

REVIEWED BY JEFFERSON DECKER

Leo Strauss, a German Jewish émigré philosopher who taught at the University of Chicago in the post-war years, has become one of the most important figures in conservative political theory. "Straussians" now inhabit several academic disciplines. In fact, Strauss' philosophy may be the foundation of contemporary neoconservatism, writes Shadia B. Drury, a professor of politics at the University of Calgary, in *Leo Strauss and the American Right*.

Strauss' major contribution to political theory was his original reading of classical texts. He believed that key insights are hidden in Plato and Xenophon and that philosophers should decipher these truths—but not popularize them because society would face devastating nihilism if exposed to the truth. According to Drury's interpretation, Strauss thought the best teachers must defend public lies in order to save the masses from knowing too much.

Obscure as Strauss' subject matter was, he inspired much of the canon-oriented approach to pedagogy defended by admirers like Allan Bloom and William Bennett. Plus, Drury writes, Strauss developed a Machiavellian approach to politics that allowed conservatives, once defined by moderation and nostalgia for the past, to see themselves as vanguards of change. Ergo, Drury suggests, the "bomb-throwing radicalism" of Newt Gingrich and his Contract with America.

Drury's approach is rather reductive. While there are Straussian modes in current neocon thought, Gingrich and company also owe debts to ex-leftists, New Age futurists and Christian fundamentalists. Worse, Drury writes as if she

were trying to refute Strauss in a political debate rather than describe his theories and explain their appeal. ■

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race

By Beverly Daniel Tatum
Basic Books
270 pages, \$24

REVIEWED BY PAT ARNOW

In most American schools, black students and white students sit apart from each other in the cafeteria. This voluntary separation—too obvious and widespread to ignore—has often been cited as evidence that integration has failed.

Clinical psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum sees these informal groupings in the cafeteria in a positive light. Black students, she writes, are developing a place in the black community and learning to traverse a difficult, often unfriendly, white world. Grouping themselves together is important for what she calls the "identity development process."

Tatum draws on her own experience growing up in a white community and later at Wesleyan University, where she "happily sat at the Black table in the dining hall every day." With a clear sense of her own cultural identity, developed in part at that table, she began teaching and writing about racism. Many of the book's anecdotes come from courses on racism that Tatum teaches at Mount Holyoke College and workshops she conducts.

Tatum matter-of-factly describes and interprets the volatile issue of racism in schools and communities, advising people of color about how to encourage their children to develop a black identity and telling white parents how to answer their toddlers' questions about blacks. She provides her target audience of conscientious, well-educated people with a guide to race's meanings and manners. ■

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This story has always had a special appeal to me because I am a walking oxymoron. I am an educated, middle-class white woman. I am also from Upper East Tennessee, which is in the middle of southern Appalachia. These characteristics, in the world as it is portrayed by movies, scholars and the popular press and prejudice, cannot exist side by side. I can't understand anything about Appalachia because that's where I'm from, but I can't really say that's where I'm from because, as everybody knows, Appalachia is a land of coal mines and poverty, the benighted home of wormy, cross-eyed children and barefooted grannies who sit on the cabin porch all day singing ballads to the plaintive accompaniment of the dulcimer.

Go figure.

Understanding Appalachia only in those terms is like thinking that the slums of Delhi are the sum of India. Appalachia has more in common with India than most people realize. While it, of course, is not a subcontinent, our people are varied, our languages many and our cultures multifaceted. While we did not have to suffer the British Raj, we have had to endure an industrial Raj of our own that defined us to suit its purposes and left us in far worse shape than it found us, without a mountain Gandhi as our advocate.

That brings me to *National Geographic*, which has a history of serving as a photojournalistic Raj, portraying the colonized through the eyes of the colonizers. My own losing battle with the National Geographic Society began in January 1996. The cover story that month featured the latest research on Neandertals. The intention of the article, I gathered, was to rehabilitate the Neandertal, who apparently was suffering from bad press at the hands of an ill-informed world. The article was full of those illustrations that *National Geographic* does so well. One was particularly striking. It showed a Neandertal man hunched over, suffering from arthritis or some degenerative disease. One arm was shriveled from a lost fight with an escaped supper, and one eyeball was all but hanging loose from a similar mishap. The point of the drawing was to show that Neandertals had to be pretty smart and tough to make it in their glacial world. It didn't go far toward improving the mental picture I had heretofore carried of them, though.

On the last page of the article was a photograph of a man contemplating, Hamlet-like, the skull of a Neandertal. The caption read, in part: "They were like us. They were just ancient hillbillies."

While I usually talk myself out of mailing irate letters, this was one incident I couldn't let slip by without protest. Surely, in these times when major publications all but stand on their heads to avoid affront and offense, *National Geographic* will see that nobody wants to be compared to the drooling, one-eyed hulk portrayed in the article.

Honor compelled me to write an articulate, well-argued—if admittedly irascible—letter, and I awaited an honorable apology. Silly me.

I forgot that, in their eyes, I was supposed to put my hat in hand, bow three times and, in a cowed, humble and embarrassed manner, beg my masters for a moment of their kind and gracious attention—while simultaneously pleading their

forgiveness for my effrontery.

Instead, I stormed up on the veranda, made a hot speech full of polysyllabic words, stamped my shoeless foot ...

... and waited.

I waited four months for a reply.

So what did the National Geographic Society finally have to say?

"While we recognize that the term 'hillbilly' can be used pejoratively," the reply said, "[we] do not believe that was the intent in this instance."

Well, I'm sorry, but there is a little saying about the road to hell that you might want to look up in your dictionary of quaint proverbs. For the past century, other people's "intentions"—to save us from ourselves, to bring us the blessings and benefits of the bourgeoisie, to enlighten us, to get us off the farm and into the mines and the mills and the factories—have carted us willy-nilly down a rocky road to a merry hell indeed. Intentions don't mow much hay, but they can make quite a mess of the field.

Words have a life beyond intention, as any fool who has had to swallow them knows. This word, in particular, has power and life in a world you are completely oblivious to, cocooned as you are on your mosquito-netted veranda.

I don't presume to speak for every one of the 13 million or so people who live in Appalachia, many of whom look at their back-road brethren with the scorn of the uplifted and enlightened. But all of us—rich and poor, leisured and harried, fully educated and partially literate—laugh at Jed and Granny and Jethro. We don't expect much from "the media" for whom stereotype is stock in trade. Rightly or wrongly, we do expect—or I, at least, expect—more from a self-defined scientific society. Shouldn't such a society be in the business of extinguishing stereotypes instead of helping fan the flame?

I suppose I will have to let it go. I understand all too clearly that this will happen again. Even if *National Geographic* is more cautious next time, which I don't foresee, there will always be somebody somewhere using that word against us.

A hundred years ago, a semi-famous educator named William Goodell Frost said that mountain people "are our contemporary ancestors." Contemporary ancestors. Ancient hillbillies. Same old, same old. Does it really make any difference? Perhaps not.

But it does to me.

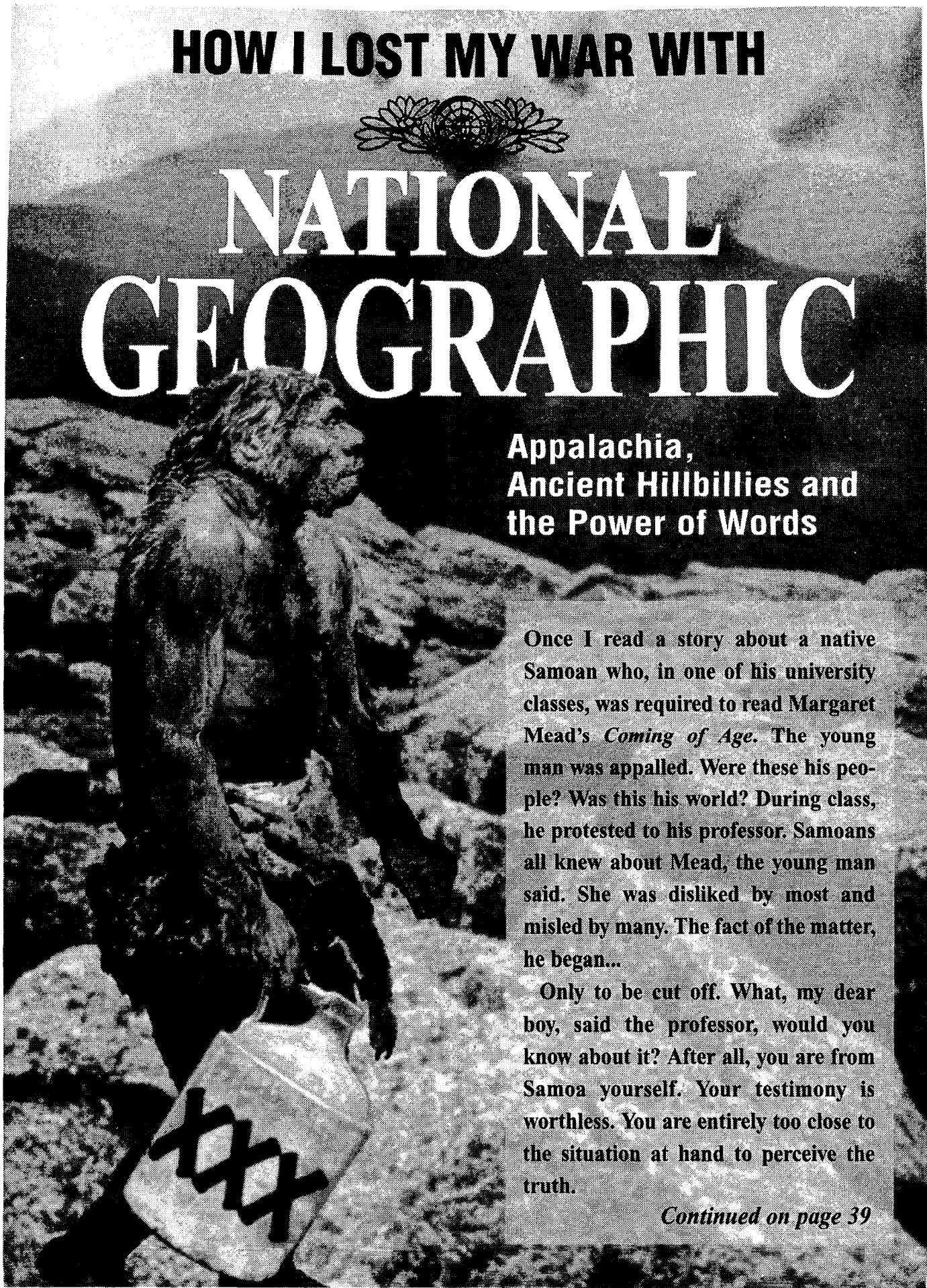
Who is nobody's Neandertal. ■

Amy Tipton Gray is a poet, writer and teacher in western North Carolina.

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HOW I LOST MY WAR WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

**Appalachia,
Ancient Hillbillies and
the Power of Words**

Once I read a story about a native Samoan who, in one of his university classes, was required to read Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age*. The young man was appalled. Were these his people? Was this his world? During class, he protested to his professor. Samoans all knew about Mead, the young man said. She was disliked by most and misled by many. The fact of the matter, he began...

Only to be cut off. What, my dear boy, said the professor, would you know about it? After all, you are from Samoa yourself. Your testimony is worthless. You are entirely too close to the situation at hand to perceive the truth.

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